

FORMER SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

THE "THIRD OPTION" AND THE ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM, 1959-2022: A HISTORICO-CONFLICT STUDY



Victor Julius Ngoh

Cover Photo: *A Cross Section of participants at the Major National Dialogue 2019*

FORMER SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

The “Third Option” and the Anglophone Problem, 1959-2022:
A Historico-Conflict Study

Victor Julius Ngoh

Former Southern Cameroons

Copyrights © Victor Julius Ngoh 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the author, except in the case of brief quotations.

Contact: The Author

Victor Julius Ngoh

Email: ngohvictor33@yahoo.com

OTHER BOOKS BY VICTOR JULIUS NGOH

- Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History (1987)
- The World Since 1919: A Short History (1989)
- Cameroun 1884-1985: Cent ans d'histoire (1990)
- History of Cameroon Since 1800 (1996)
- Slave Settlement in the Banyang Country 1800-1950
Co-Authored with E.S.D. Foumin (1998)
- Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: A Constitutional History (2001)
- Cameroon from a Federal to Unitary State 1961-1972:
A Critical Study (ed.) (2004)
- Les Dessous de la Reunification du Cameroun de 1955 á 1961 (2011).
- The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification, 1955-1961 (2011)
- Le Cameroun de 1884 á nos jours (2018): Histoire d'un Peuple (2019)
- Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People (2019)
- Abrogation du Fédéralisme au Cameroun en 1972: Analyse Historique (2019)
- Abrogation of Federalism in Cameroon: A Historical Analysis (2019)

CONTENTS

Other Books by Victor Julius Ngoh	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	x
PREFACE	xvi
FOREWORD	xx
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background to German Annexation and Expulsion from German Kamerun	1
British Administration in Southern Cameroons	5
Stirring up Nationalism in Southern Cameroons between the Wars and After.....	12
Catalysts of Constitutional Developments in Southern Cameroons	16
Internal Forces	16
Impact of World War II	16
The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC).....	17
The UPC Factor	18
Pressure Groups and Trade Unions.....	19
British Neglect	20
Southern Cameroons-Nigeria Connection	21
External Forces	23
Southern Cameroons as a UN Trust Territory.....	23
Anti-colonial Position of the USA, USSR and the Afro-Asian Bloc.....	27
Student Unions/Associations	28
Conclusion	28
 CHAPTER ONE	 31
NEGOTIATIONS ON INDEPENDENCE	31
Introduction.....	31
Lack of Political Consensus.....	31
Absence of Trust and Existence of Suspicion among Southern Cameroons Politicians	32
Anglo-French Interest.....	34
Richards Constitution to Macpherson Constitution	35
Macpherson Constitution and the Eastern Regional Crisis.....	38

Lyttelton Constitution and Southern Cameroons Quasi-Federal State	44
Lagos Constitutional Conference, January 1954	45
French Cameroonians Resident in Southern Cameroons.....	48
Split within KNC and Creation of KNDP.....	52
Quasi-Federal Territory to Regional Status	56
Bamenda Conference, May-June 1956	58
March 1957 Elections: KNDP and KPP Attempted Forming a Government	61
London Constitutional Conference 1957	63
January 1959 General Elections.....	67
Conclusion	70
CHAPTER TWO	71
SEARCH FOR A “THIRD OPTION”	71
Introduction.....	71
Early Views of Reunification in Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon.....	71
Drafting the Plebiscite Questions.....	72
First Annual Convention of NUKS, Kumba, July 1959	76
Mamfe Plebiscite Conference August 1959.....	77
Reality of the Lurking Option: Secession and Separate Independence	80
First Pan-Kamerun Students Conference, Yaounde, August 1959.....	83
UN Again and the “Third Option”	84
Failure of the Quest for a “Third Option”, September-October 1959	89
Southern Cameroons Prepared for Plebiscite	92
KNDP and its Allies	92
CPNC Actions.....	97
Quest for the “Third Option” Again.....	98
London Conference, November 1960.....	101
Understanding the Rejection of the Third Option” Again	103
Conclusion	111
CHAPTER THREE	113
PLEBISCITE AND ACCEPTANCE OF RESULTS	113
Introduction.....	113
Understanding Resolutions 1514 and 1541	113
Plebiscite Campaigns and Negotiations for Independence.....	114

KNDP and CPNC Campaign Slogans and Messages	114
Interpretation of Results: In Southern Cameroons.....	117
Interpretation of Results: At the UN	120
Analyzing UN Resolution 1608 (XV)	124
Truce by Southern Cameroons Leaders	127
To the Foumban Conference, July 1961	127
Bamenda “All-Party” Constitutional Conference, 26-28 June 1961.	131
Conclusion	135
CHAPTER FOUR.....	137
CRAFTING THE FEDERAL	137
CONSTITUTION AND INDEPENDENCE	137
Introduction.....	137
Southern Cameroons Comments/Suggestions on the “Draft Federal Proposals”...	143
Southern Cameroons Gave Away Equal Status	147
Yaounde Tripartite Talks, 2-7 August 1961	151
The Position of the Cameroons Development Corporation.....	157
Eastwood’s Grim Prophecy on Reunification	158
Analysis of the Organisation and Conduct of the “Talks”	160
Yaounde Tripartite Talks to Independence by Joining.....	165
Independence upon Joining the Republic of Cameroon	168
Conclusion	176
CHAPTER FIVE	177
ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM	177
Introduction.....	177
Brief Analysis of the Federal Constitution vis-à-vis the Anglophone Problem.....	178
Who is an Anglophone?	180
What is the Anglophone Problem?	181
Origin of the Anglophone Problem.....	184
Inching into the Anglophone Crisis	187
SCNC Delegation to the UN, June 1995	197
Extremist SCNC Position of Secession, December 1999.....	199
Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd. Signed Exploration Rights.....	200
Fruitless Meetings, Supplications and Outburst of the Crisis.....	201

Government Reaction	209
Position of the Churches	212
Crisis Degenerated into Armed Conflict.....	217
1 st October Syndrome and Impact in 2017.....	218
Biya Reacted to the killings of some members of the National Defense and Security Forces.....	221
SCNC Declared War Before November 2016	224
Conclusion	226
CHAPTER SIX	229
ANGLOPHONE CRISIS TRANSFORMED	229
INTO ARMED CONFLICT	229
Introduction.....	229
Secessionist Amba Fighters and the Anglophone Population.....	230
Kumba Massacre, 24 October 2020.....	240
Dark Month of November 2020.....	243
Abduction of Senator Regina Elizabeth Mundi, 30 April 2022.....	252
Attack of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Nchang-Mamfe, 16 September 2022	254
Amba inter-and intra-fighting	256
National Defence and Security Forces and the Anglophone Problem/Crisis	256
Ngarbuh Massacre, 14 February 2020	257
Military purged Some Villages of Amba Fighters	259
Black September Month 2021 for the Military.....	265
Assassination of "Field Marshal" Oliver Lekeaka, 12 July 2022	267
Conclusion	271
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	273
GRIEVANCES AND QUEST FOR SOLUTIONS	273
Introduction.....	273
Common Law Lawyers' Grievances.....	275
Government and Resolution of Teachers' Grievances	276
Government and Resolution of Lawyers' Grievances	277
Humanitarian Assistance: The Churches	278
Humanitarian Assistance: The Government	278
Humanitarian Assistance: NGOs	280

Calls for the Peaceful Resolution of the Crisis	282
Government Addressed the Crisis.....	285
Steps to Speed up Resolution of the Crisis	287
Creation of National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee	287
Biya Ordered Discontinuance of Court Proceedings for Misdemeanours, December 2018.....	289
Anglophones Grappled with Options.....	291
Secession and Independence.....	291
Federalism.....	292
Decentralisation	293
Conclusion	294
CHAPTER EIGHT	295
BIYA CONVENED A MAJOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE	295
Introduction.....	295
On the Road to the Major National Dialogue	295
Implementation of MND Recommendations.....	300
Law No. 2019/024 to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities.....	301
Special Status for the North-West and South-West Regions	302
Biya Defined the Duties of the Public Independent Conciliator.....	304
Analysis of the Special Status.....	306
Government Set-up the PPRD-NW/SW	308
Secret “Talks” and COVID-19.....	311
The Swiss Initiative, June 2019	312
Yaounde “Talks” with Success Nkongho, December 2019-2020.....	313
Secret Missions to Ghana and the USA, February 2020	314
July 2020 “Talks”	315
Reactions to the July 2020 “Talks”	316
US Senate Draft Resolution, September 2020.....	317
Southwest Youth League (SWYL).....	320
Toronto Retreat, 30th October 2021-1st November 2021.....	320
Call-off of School Boycott.....	322
US Congressmen and Cameroonian MPs Exchanged Words.....	325

Inaction of Cameroonian MPs and Senators.....	328
US Policy and the Anglophone Crisis.....	334
First National Women's Convention for Peace in Cameroon	336
Conclusion	343
GENERAL CONCLUSION	245
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	351
PRIMARY SOURCES.....	351
SECONDARY SOURCES.....	358

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAC	All Anglophone Conference
AAS	Associates of African States
ACT	Ambazonia Coalition Team
ADD	Alliance for Democracy and Development/ <i>Alliance pour la Démocratie et le Développement du Cameroun</i>
ADF	Ambazonia Defense Force
AFCON	Africa Cup of Nations
AFD	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i>
AFP	Alliance for Progress
AG	Action Group (Party)
AGC	Anglophone General Conference
AGC	Ambazonia Governing Council
AID	Agency for International Development
ALCAM	<i>Assemblée Législative du Cameroun</i>
ALIM	Ambazonia Liberation Movement
ALNK	Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun
AM	Ambazonia Movement
APEC	Ambazonia People's Emancipation Council
ARF	Ambazonia Restoration Forces
ASDRA	Ambazonia Self-Defence Restoration
ATCAM	<i>Assemblée Territoriale du Cameroun</i>
AU	African Union
BAPEC	Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference
BATTUC	Baptist Teachers' Trade Union
BDC	<i>Bloc Démocratique Camerounaise</i>
CACSC	Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium
CAF	Confederation of African Football
CAM	Cameroon Action Movement <i>also</i> Cameroon Anglophone Movement
CATTU	Cameroon Anglophone Teachers' Trade Union
CBA	Cameroon Bar Association
CBC	Cameroon Baptist Convention

CCC	Cameroon Commoners Congress
CCFGA	Coalition of Cameroon Federalist Groups & Activists
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CDN	Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations
CDU	Cameroon Democratic Union
CEF	Cameroon Education Forum
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CETTU	Catholic Education Teacher's Trade Union
CFA	<i>Communauté Financière Africaine</i>
CHRDA	Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa
CIP	Cameroons Indigenes Party
CNF	Cameroon National Federation
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CO	Colonial Office
COREC	Committee for the Reunification of the Cameroons
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CPNC	Cameroon People's National Convention
CPP	Convention People's Party <i>also</i> Cameroon People's Party
CRM	Cameroon Renaissance Movement
CRTV	Cameroon Radio and Television
CUC	Cameroon United Congress
CWU	Cameroons Welfare Union
CYL	Cameroons Youth League
DC	<i>Démocrates Camerounais</i>
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation
DED	Deferred Enforced Departure
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DO	Divisional Officer/District Officer
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EDF	European Development Fund

ENAM	<i>Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de la Magistrature</i>
ENS	<i>Ecole Normale Supérieur</i>
ESOCAM	<i>Evolution Social Camerounaise</i>
EU	European Union
FECAFOOT	<i>Fédération Camerounaise du Football</i>
FAKLA	Fako Lawyers' Association
FCWU	French Cameroon Welfare Union
FO	Foreign Office
FSLC	First School Leaving Certificate
FWCM	Free West Cameroon Movement
GBHS	Government Bilingual High School
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCE A'L	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
GCE O'L	General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
GICAM	<i>Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun</i>
HRH	His Royal Highness
HTTC	Higher Teacher Training College
HTTTC	Higher Teacher Technical Training College
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IG	Interim Government
IKSA	Ibadan Kamerun Students Association
INGOs	International Non-Government Organisations
JEUCAFRA	<i>Jeunesse Camerounaise Française</i>
KNC	Kamerun National Congress
KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
KPP	Kamerun People's Party
KSSC	Kamerun Students Strategic Committee
KUNC	Kamerun United National Congress
KUP	Kamerun United Party
LRC	<i>La République du Cameroun</i>

MALA	Manyu Lawyers' Association
MANC	<i>Mouvement d'Action Nationale Camerounaise</i>
MELA	Meme Lawyers' Association
MIDENO	<i>Mission de Développement du Nord-Ouest</i>
MIO	<i>Mouvement des Indépendants d'Outre-mer</i>
MND	Major National Dialogue
MoRISC	Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons
MPs	Members of Parliament
NA	Native Authority/Native Administrative
NCHRF	National Commission on Human Right and Freedom
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NDDRC	National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee
NEC	National Executive Committee/National Executive Council
NECC	National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NKDP	Northern Kamerun Democratic Party
NOWEFU	North West Fons Union
NOWELA	North West Lawyers' Association
NOWELA	North West Elite Association
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NUFC	National Union of French Cameroon
NUKS	National Union of Kamerun Students
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OK	One Kamerun (Party)
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
PEATT	Presbyterian Education Authority Teachers' Trade Union
PIC	Public Independent Conciliator
PPRD-NW/SW	Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the North-West and South-West Regions
PSC	<i>Parti Socialiste Camerounais</i>
PSD	<i>Parti Socialiste Démocrates</i>

PSS	Presbyterian Secondary School
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RIB	Rapid Intervention Batallion
RoA	Republic of Ambazonia
RPF	<i>Rassemblement du Peuple Français</i>
SABECC	St. Benedict's Comprehensive College
SCACUF	Southern Cameroons Ambazonia United Front
SCAPO	Southern Cameroons People's Organisation
SCBA	Southern Cameroons Bar Association
SCCC	Southern Cameroons Chiefs Conference
SCDF	Southern Cameroons Defence Forces
SCHA	Southern Cameroons House of Assembly
SCHC	Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs
SCNC	Southern Cameroons National Council
SCYL	Southern Cameroons Youth League
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SDNK	<i>Sinistre de la Défense Nationale du Kamerun</i>
SDO	Senior Divisional Officer
SNWOT	South West-North West Women Taskforce
SOCADef	Southern Cameroons Defence Forces
SONARA	<i>Société Nationale de Raffinage</i>
SS	Special Status
SWECC	South West Chiefs Conference
SWELA	South West Elite Association
SWYL	Southwest Youth League
SYNES	<i>Syndicat National des Enseignants du Supérieur</i>
SYNES/UB	<i>Syndicat National des Enseignants du Supérieur/University of Buea</i>
SYNES/UBa	<i>Syndicat National des Enseignants Supérieur/University of Bamenda</i>
TAC	Teachers Association of Cameroon
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
UBSU	University of Buea Students Union
UC	<i>Union Camerounaise</i>
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPC	<i>Union des Populations du Cameroun</i>
US	United States
USC	<i>Union Sociale Camerounaise</i>
VOA	Voice of America
WADA	Wum Area Development Authority
WCBA	West Cameroon Bar Association
WCHA	West Cameroon House of Assembly
WCHC	West Cameroon House of Chiefs
WW I	World War One
WW II	World War Two
YOSA	Young Sports Academy

PREFACE

The Anglophone¹ Crisis in Cameroon which erupted in October/November 2016 initially started as corporate demands by English-speaking (Anglophone) Teachers' Trade Unions and Common Law Lawyers' Associations. In less than six months, it degenerated into an armed conflict between secessionists/separatists and Government forces. The secessionists/separatists wanted an independent state for the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon while the Government, through its national defence and security forces, fought to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of the country. The crisis opened the floodgate for an in-depth examination and analysis of the political history of former British Southern Cameroons. The territory achieved independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961. The crisis and the subsequent armed conflict brought to the forefront all types of "historians" and "political scientists" and, in the process, the political history of former Southern Cameroons as part of the Republic of Cameroon² was muddled and muddled up.

The Anglophone Crisis was caused by the failure of the Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya Governments to adequately safeguard and promote the Anglo-Saxon administrative, political, judicial and educational systems which the people of former Southern Cameroons took with them into the union in 1961. The crisis was merely part of what was known as the Anglophone Problem. The "Problem" was rooted in the failure or inability of Southern Cameroons to achieve independence as a separate political polity (*"The Third Option"*) as opposed to achieving independence by either joining the Federation of Nigeria (*Association*) or the Republic of Cameroon (*Reunification*).

The "Third Option" was not well articulated by any Southern Cameroons politician, political party, political pressure group or association until February 1959 when the Kamerun United Party was founded by Paul M. Kale. No major political party in the territory called for the independence of Southern Cameroons as a separate political state until September/October 1959. In October 1959, John Ngu Foncha of the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) and Dr. EML Endeley of the Kamerun National

1 The term "Anglophone" refers to the people of former Southern Cameroons who now constitute the North West and South West Regions of present-day Republic of Cameroon (see chapter five).

2 The appellation of the country which emerged following Southern Cameroons achieving independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon in 1961 was the Federal Republic of Cameroon; the name existed between 1961 and 1972. From 1972 until 1984, it was called the United Republic of Cameroon and from February 1984, it became christened the Republic of Cameroon. This, of course, necessitated major changes in the constitution of the country.

Congress (KNC)/the Kamerun People's Party (KPP) Alliance took up the option of Southern Cameroons achieving independence as a separate political entity ("The Third Option"). This was done at the UN in a politically lackadaisical and lackluster manner with no political conviction and, without any prior behind-the-scene discussion by the political class in Southern Cameroons. It failed in October 1959 and failed again in November 1960.

The territory was left with the options of attaining independence by either *association* with the Federation of Nigeria or by its joining the Republic of Cameroon through (*re*) *unification*. The Southern Cameroons electorate opted for (*re*) *unification* in an UN-supervised Plebiscite on 11th February 1961. The UN, through its Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961, recognised and validated the Plebiscite Results. At the same time, it also invited the UK, as the Administering Authority, and the Governments of Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon to undertake discussions geared towards the realization of the "agreed and declared policies of the parties [the Southern Cameroon and Republic of Cameroon] concerned" and how "independence by joining" would be implemented.

Ahidjo and Foncha agreed that reunification would be "on the basis of a federation" in order to provide for the preservation and promotion of the two derived-foreign cultures in the area where they operated before reunification. The poor governance by the Ahidjo and Biya governments as perceived and felt by a majority of Anglophones (the people of former Southern Cameroons) fanned the flames of discontent and marginalization; the poor governance also affected the populations in the other eight Francophone regions. These were accentuated by an avalanche of dis-information by some Cameroonians, especially some Anglophone political activists, on the territory's quest for, and attainment of, independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon.

It is within this context that this publication attempts to set the record straight through the use of primary sources, some of which were recently de-classified; secondary sources; and, as an eye-witness and/or participant in some of the events. The author has also made generous use of information on some topics from one of his publications titled *Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. The present work is aimed at providing a better and de-sentimentalized understanding of the complex political history of Cameroon and more especially of the former British Southern Cameroons which laid the foundation for the Anglophone Problem. The Anglophone Problem was

eventually transformed into the “Anglophone Crisis” or the “socio-political crisis” of the North West and South West Regions.

This publication is divided into eight chapters excluding the General Introduction and the General Conclusion. The General Introduction examines the historical background to the request for a “Third Option” and the Anglophone Crisis. It briefly scrutinizes the British administration, with its policy of Indirect Rule, in Southern Cameroons. It also presents the factors and forces which, after World War II, set in motion the demand for independence by the people of British Southern Cameroons. Chapter one discusses the forces which dictated the territory’s negotiation for independence; and, the constitutional processes and conferences that shaped the territory’s political evolution until October 1959. It also explores the failure of the territory’s politicians to agree on one of the following options: independence in association with Nigeria; independence by reuniting with French Cameroons; and, independence as a separate political entity.

Chapter two examines the territory’s search for a “Third Option and the inability of Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley to secure it for the territory. Chapter three treats the failure of the UN to grant Southern Cameroons the “Third Option” and the decision by the UN to confirm the plebiscite options for the 11th of February 1961 which called on the electorate to pronounce on: “independence in association with Nigeria” and “independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon.” It analyses the victory of the KNDP against Dr. EML Endeley’s Cameroon National People’s Convention (CPNC), the outcome of the merger between the KNC and the KPP in June 1960. The chapter explores the burning issue of UN Resolutions 1514 and 1541 which were enacted to clarify UN Article 76 (b). It presents the February 1961 campaigns by the KNDP and CPNC and the famous UN Resolution 1608. Finally, it sets the stage for the examination of the Fouban Conference in chapter four through the Bamenda “All Party” Constitutional Conference. The next chapter, therefore, is on the Fouban Conference *per se* and the making of the federal constitution.

The thrust of chapter four is the making of the federal constitution and the manner in which Southern Cameroons achieved independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon. This chapter looks at the planting of the seeds of the Anglophone Problem. The last three chapters discuss the Anglophone Problem which erupted in November 2016 and metamorphosed into the socio-political crisis (armed conflict) in the North West and South West Regions and the various solutions which the government implemented in attempting to resolve the crisis. Chapter five presents the origin of the Anglophone Problem and the crisis that emanated from it. It examines

the attempts made by Anglophone activists to highlight the plight of the population of the two regions. Chapter six deals with the government's initial nonchalant manner in handling the crisis and the shifting demands of the Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law Lawyers' Associations which transformed the crisis into an armed conflict. Chapter seven is on the grievances presented by the Teachers' Trade Unions, the Common Law lawyers' associations and the solutions and actions which the government took, notably after the Major National Dialogue (MND), in addressing the crisis. Chapter eight examines the Major National Dialogue and the various unsuccessful secret peace talks. The MND produced a Special Status for the North West and South West Regions but its contents/substance, according to some Anglophone political activists who directly or indirectly supported the "cause", fell short of addressing "the high aspirations of the population of the North West and South West Regions." The General Conclusion provides a bird's eye view of the discussions from the general introduction to chapter eight.

In the course of researching and writing this publication, I received immense assistance from several persons and institutions. My gratitude goes to my colleagues especially Prof. Nixon Takor who provided me with some important documents; my former students Dr. Thomas Eta for proofreading the draft and offering very helpful comments on it; and, Stephen Bessong, a Ph.D student at the University of Bamenda who took time off his busy schedule to proofread the manuscript. I benefited immensely from their critical comments.

The workers at the National Archives, Buea, who eased my search for primary sources, earned my appreciation. My interaction with several actors and keen observers on Cameroon political story especially on the Anglophone Problem and my critical exchanges with some uncompromising Anglophone activists sharpened my understanding and analysis of the problem; I am thankful to all of them. I am equally grateful to Seraphine Numfor Sirri, my adopted daughter, who withstood my difficult moments. I am, nonetheless, responsible for the analysis, positions, and errors that may be found in this publication.

Victor Julius Ngoh
Catholic University Institute of Buea
Buea, Cameroon
November 2022

FOREWORD

One emphatic and categorical point that runs through Victor Julius Ngoh's work is the statement that "The source of the Anglophone Problem which generated into a crisis and subsequently into an armed conflict was the constitutional proposals which emerged from the Foumban Conference of July 1961. These proposals were put into a constitutional form at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks of August 1961" (p.137). The linear pattern of the words "Problem," "crisis" and "armed conflict" sheds a conflict transformation light on what Chinua Achebe considers as "Where the rain began to beat us." Without any prejudice to historical correctness and political neutrality, Ngoh's post-mortem approach aims at exhuming the bones of polarized contradictions and parochial interest that continue to be the stock in trade of both policy makers and its citizenry.

But beneath this serial yet discordant vocal clamour for some form of geo-political autonomy of Southern Cameroons, West Cameroon or Anglophone landscape lies the legitimate concern for a permanent process that addresses the root cause rather than the latent or manifest of the Anglophone Question. Were the Anglophone Problem a mere figment of the imagination of nostalgic idlers or an emotional outburst of political adventurers, it would have petered out a long time ago. Fortunately, this work is inundated with examples of conflict management and nation building strategies ranging from pre-dialogue processes and back-channel communications to discreet negotiations and open constitutional conferences. The timeliness and topicality of *Former Southern Cameroons: The "Third Option" and the Anglophone Problem 1959-2022: A Historico-Conflict Study* stretches from a narrative of statistics, memos and quotations to the Martin Luther King's mantra of "Where do we go from here?" While the ideological and armed conflict continues to fuel the war economy, works like this shall continue to animate discussions even around the fleeting but elusive shadow of "Third Option."

It was time the applause over gun violence triumphalism and conflict entrepreneurship gave way to a new paradigm of consensual constitutional engineering and a union of diversity. For never before have a people been faced with such a compelling challenge of building connecting tissues between their past no matter how problematic and their present no matter how controversial. Knowing Ngoh for his intellectual modesty, I am certain that he would agree that other historical interpretations abound, some complementary and others at variance. Be it as it may, no matter how long we wear blinkers of procrastination, no matter how long we clothe ourselves with robes of

denial, and no matter how long we sedate our consciences with an overdose of political tranquilisers, there shall willy-nilly come a time when the overriding concern of state interest becomes a citizenship culture.

In the end, the author's tripartite legacy in writing this book is one of a watch dog observing society's predicament and proposing solutions; one of a whistle blower preventing further descent into the abyss of collective annihilation; and one of a chronicler-navigator directing the politician-sailor in sailing the ship of state to the shores of peaceful coexistence. And it is this legacy that the students of history, political science, sociology, Cameroon and African studies should hopefully take home after reading this work.

George Ngwane

Senior Chevening Fellow in Conflict Prevention from
the University of York (UK)

Member, National Commission for the Promotion of
Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (Cameroon)

Writer and Civil Society Advocate

Yaounde, Cameroon

November 2022

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The historiography of the “Third Option”¹ and the Anglophone Problem in Cameroon can best be understood from the knowledge of the composition of the country’s ethnic population; the impact of German annexation; and, German administration of what became German Kamerun from 1884 to 1916. The defeat and expulsion of the Germans from the territory by a combined Anglo-French force, aided by Belgian forces, led to the arbitrary partition of the territory in 1916 between Britain and France into British Cameroons and French Cameroon; the 1916 partition (the Picot Partition and the March London Agreement) was confirmed by the 1919 Milner-Simon Agreement. In implementing their colonial administrative policies in their respective spheres of former German Kamerun, Britain and France inadvertently kept alive the spirit of “once a united German Kamerun.” The effects of the Second World War on the rise of nationalism and the constitutional developments in British Cameroons and French Cameroon after the war set the population on a difficult path towards the attainment of independence. This study is limited to British Southern Cameroons (present-day North West and South West Regions of Cameroon) because the people of the territory opted in 1961 to attain independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon and the question of a “Third Option” was an entirely Southern Cameroons affair as British Northern Cameroons² was not concerned; neither was it consulted.

Background to German Annexation and Expulsion from German Kamerun

Cameroon, which is usually referred to as “Africa in miniature,” is a German creation. Prior to the scramble, partition and colonization of Africa after the mid 19th century,

-
- 1 The “Third Option” was the name given to the request for Southern Cameroons to attain independence as a separate political entity or State. The other two options were: independence in association with Nigeria and, independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon.
 - 2 British Northern Cameroons was one of the two parts of British Cameroons that was carved out of the territory in 1922 because the British felt that it would have been extremely difficult to administer the two disjointed territories (British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons) as one territory. British Northern Cameroons was administered by the British with the sole goal of ensuring that the population attained independence in association with Nigeria. In November 1959, the electorate in Northern Cameroons voted overwhelmingly in favour of deciding their political future at a later date and rejected being “part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation of Nigeria becomes independent.” In spite of this, the Northern Cameroons electorate was allowed to vote in the December 1959. Nigerian Federal elections. In February 1961, Northern Cameroons voted to attain independence by joining the Federation of Nigeria.

various ethnic populations which later inhabited the territory called Cameroon were grouped into “independent” chiefdoms, fondoms, communities or kingdoms. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Portuguese, Dutch, British, French and German traders, explorers and missionaries journeyed into the territories occupied by ethnic (tribal) groups such as the Tikar (e.g. Kom, Nsaw, Bum and Bafut); the Chamba (e.g. the Bali); the Bamileke, Bamum, Fang-Beti (Pahuin); Pygmies, Mbororos, Bakweri, Bakossi, Fulani and Bafaw.³ Some of these ethnic groups were attacked, subjugated and ruled by more powerful ethnic groups before the partition and colonization of Africa. In 1884 the British failed to annex Douala and its inhabitants along the Bight of Biafra on the West African coast despite numerous appeals from the Duala kings and chiefs. The Germans exploited the British reluctance and successfully annexed the Duala and their territory in July 1884 with the signing of the Germano-Duala treaty.⁴

But, before the signing of the Germano-Duala treaty, an English Baptist missionary, Alfred Saker,⁵ had purchased a small piece of territory from King William, Bile, of Bimbia on 23 August 1858. The final settlement which included the piece of territory and the district of Amboise Bay cost about £2,000.⁶ This piece of territory and the district of Amboise Bay were named Victoria by Alfred Saker in honour of Queen Victoria; the final settlement was made in August 1862. The territory, Victoria, did not include the Bakweri (Buea) country; neither did it include the forest zone bordering the Bakweri country, much less the present-day Bamenda grassfield.⁷ The Berlin Conference of November 1884 to February 1885 approved the partition and colonization of Africa and insisted on the “effective occupation” of the territory by the European colonizers.

3 For more on the peopling of Cameroon, see Victor Julius Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People* (Limbe: Design House, 2019), 5-26.

4 Shirley G. Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon 1883-1887* (Buea: Government Press, 1968), 32-57.

5 Alfred Saker (born in July 1814 and died in March 1880) was an English Baptist missionary who arrived in Fernando Po with Rev. John Clarke on 16 February 1844. In June 1844, Saker visited King Akwa of Douala and later returned to Fernando Po. In 1845, the Spanish Consul-General, Don Carlos Chacon, instructed that Baptist missionaries in the island should be expelled unless they agreed to remain in a private capacity. Spanish Catholics arrived in Fernando Po in 1856 and with the arrival of the Jesuits in May 1858; the non-Catholic European missionaries were forced to leave. Saker moved to Bimbia and purchased a piece of land from King William, Bile, in August 1858 and named it Victoria in honour of Queen Victoria.

6 Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses*, 53.

7 This is very important to note because when the “Anglophone Problem (Crisis)” erupted in 2016, some English-speaking Cameroonian (Anglophone) activists from the present-day North West and South West Regions erroneously stated that the territory called Southern Cameroons was originally British from 1858 to 1887.

As a result of the treaties signed between the indigenous kings and chiefs with German authorities and explorers (sale contracts, negotiated treaties and peace treaties), German colonial administration expanded its authority in what eventually became German Kamerun through either military expeditions, collaboration or cooperation with the indigenous kings and chiefs. Meanwhile, in 1887, the English London Baptist Missionary Society decided to relinquish Victoria to the German Basel Mission in exchange of the German claims to the west of Lagos in Nigeria. The German Basel Mission paid the English Baptist Missionary Society the sum of £4,000; an Exchange of Notes on 27 January and 31 January 1887 officially transferred Victoria to the Germans.⁸

German Kamerun came into being before the outbreak of the 1914-1918 First World War (1914-1916 in German Kamerun). The German colonization of the territory was essentially the work of the German business class and the motive was primarily economic with prestige being a distant second. The defeat of Germany during World War One (WWI) and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 approved the previous provisional partition of German Kamerun into British and French spheres after the failure of the French-proposed condominium⁹: the Picot Partition of February 1916; the March 1916 Dobell Proclamation No. 10; and, the 10 July 1919 Milner-Simon Agreement.¹⁰ In 1922, the League of Nations, according to Articles 22 and 23, confirmed the Anglo-French arrangements in former German Kamerun as France took 4/5 of the territory and Britain retained 1/5. British Cameroons and French Cameroon were classified as Class B Mandates of the League of Nations.

The new status of former German Kamerun as a mandated territory of the League of Nations was dictated by two factors: the Anglo-French thinking on the new boundaries of the territory; and, the Euro-American thinking on the judicial status of French Cameroon and British Cameroons which emerged from the provisional Anglo-French partition of the territory. The European powers preferred the annexation of former German colonies but were compelled to take into consideration the position of the USA. The USA which played a decisive role in the outcome of WWI presented a compromise concept of the mandate system.¹¹ Deltombe *et al.* explain that the mandate system did not explicitly recognize the sovereignty of London and Paris on their respective

8 Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses*, 62, Endnote 124.

9 See Lovett Z. Elango, *The Anglo French Condominium in Cameroon 1914-1916: History of A Misunderstanding* (Revised Edition). Lagos: Green and Cherished Ltd., 2018.

10 Victor Julius Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 2.

11 Thomas Deltombe *et al*, *La Guerre du Cameroun: L'intervention de la Françafrique 1948-1971* (Paris : Editions La Découverte, 2016), 40.

spheres of former German Kamerun. The result was the confusion which the mandate system created regarding who was sovereign in the partitioned territory: the League of Nations; the Mandatory Authorities in their respective spheres; or the indigenous population. This confusion was compounded because the partition was intended to be temporary. Unfortunately, the Mandatory Authorities were allowed to implement their respective colonial policies in the spheres of former German Kamerun which they controlled, although they had to respect the fundamental human rights of the indigenous population. This, notwithstanding, London and Paris administered their respective spheres of the former German Kamerun more or less like their other African colonies.

Britain and France were called upon to exercise control, administratively and otherwise, over their respective spheres of Cameroon (see Map I). Article 2 of the Mandate Agreement called on Britain and France to ensure the maintenance of "peace, order and good government of the territory and promotion... of the material and moral well-being and social progress of its inhabitants."¹² In the subsequent partition of British Cameroons into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons, Article 9 of the Mandate Agreement authorized Britain "to be at liberty to apply her laws to the territory under the mandate... and to constitute the territory into customs, fiscal or administrative union or federation with the adjacent territories under her sovereignty or control...."¹³

In the partition of German Kamerun, the British and French failed to take into consideration the interests of the population as well as the ethnic, cultural, social, commercial, religious and political affinities or unity of the affected peoples. Consequently, some ethnic groups, villages, farmlands and plantations were split between British Cameroons and French Cameroon. The result of the partition was that parts of the Duala, Mbo and Bamileke peoples and territories, for instance, were split between British Cameroons and French Cameroon. In addition, some members of ethnic groups which existed in French Cameroon and found themselves working in plantations and other business enterprises in the British Cameroons did not return to meet their kin and kith in French Cameroon; these included the Bakoko, Bakossi and Elung groups in present-day Kupe-Manenguba Division, Bamileke, Bamum, Bassa, Beti

12 Mandate Agreement cited in David E. Gardinier, "The British in Cameroons, 1919-1939" in *Britain and Germany in Africa*, (eds.) P. Gifford and W.R. Louis (New Haven: Yale university Press, 1967), 524.

13 Ibid.

and Duala. The administration of the former German Kamerun by Britain and France led to the application of different administrative colonial policies and principles. The British introduced the administrative colonial policy of Indirect Rule while the French implemented the policy of Assimilation (later Association). The British divided British Cameroons into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons.

In the search for independence by British Cameroons and French Cameroon, and the British and French execution of the responsibility assigned to them in conformity with Article 76(b) of the UN Charter, British Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons were eventually confronted with two choices or options:

Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?

OR

Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon?

French Cameroon did not go through the process of “making choices” or being presented with “options.”

It is within this background that the Anglophone Problem/Crisis in Cameroon should be viewed. Southern Cameroons search for independence, the mode of the search for independence, how independence was obtained and the terms/conditions that led to its attainment of independence “upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon...”¹⁴ are cardinal pillars in understanding the Anglophone Problem and crisis/conflict in Cameroon. Southern Cameroons independence as a separate political entity, the “Third Option,” became an important topic for examination by the international actors between October 1959 and November 1960. But, it was not seriously spear-headed by any of the major political parties in Southern Cameroons: the KNDP, KNC or the KPP.

British Administration in Southern Cameroons

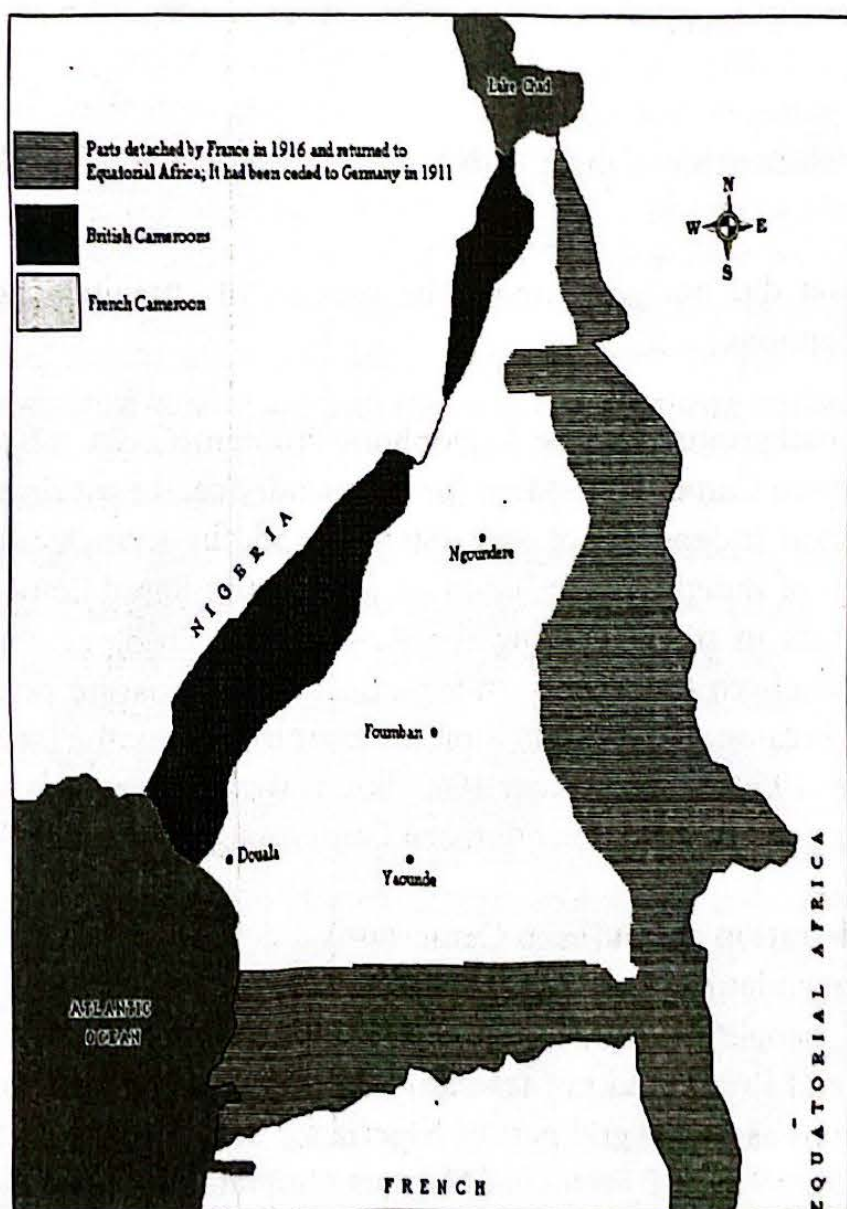
Britain, as the mandatory power of the League of Nations, was not called upon to administer the people of British Cameroons towards either self-government or independence; and Britain did not take any step towards that goal. In administering British Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria for administrative convenience, and in line with Article 9 of the League of Nations Mandate Agreement, Britain divided

14 Cited in “The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Communication No. 266/203: Dr. Gumne and Members of the SCNC and SCAPO (for themselves and on behalf of the people of the Southern Cameroons) v. La République du Cameroun,” Unpublished manuscript.

British Cameroons into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons because of the following reasons:

- i) The sphere of the former German Cameroon which Britain acquired consisted of two narrow dis-jointed strips of territory;
- ii) The existence of geographical barriers and a very poor transport and communication network "made its effective administration as a single unit separated from Nigeria extremely difficult and expensive;"¹⁵
- iii) The British colonial authorities regarded the northern section of British Cameroons as an extension of the Nigerian territory and a natural part of northern Nigeria.¹⁶

Map I: Former German Kamerun showing British Cameroons



15 Gardinier, "The British in the Cameroons," 26.

16 Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 3.

In 1922, Sir Hugh Charles Clifford's¹⁷ proposal to Winston S. Churchill¹⁸ that the northern section of British Cameroons should be administered as an integral part of the Emirate of Yola (Adamawa) was accepted. For administrative and financial convenience, Britain, therefore, partitioned British Cameroons into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. Until 1947 when the Richards' Constitution went operational, British Northern Cameroons was administered as part of the Northern Province of the Protectorates of Nigeria and British Southern Cameroons as part of the Southern Provinces of the Protectorate of Nigeria. Britain's decision to accept the partition of former German Kamerun, provisionally, and administer its sphere of the territory, British Cameroons, as part of Nigeria was dictated by the following factors:

- i) Britain was reluctant to acquire Cameroon after 1914 because it wanted Cameroon merely as a bargaining chip "in the world-wide negotiations that were expected to follow the cessation of general hostilities after the First World War"¹⁹;
- ii) The British Foreign Office (FO) and initially the Secretary of State for Colonies, Lewis Harcourt, felt that the Cameroons "was expendable" and saw it "only as something which could be used to get concessions elsewhere"²⁰;
- iii) Harcourt suggested to Frederick Lugard²¹ that Britain should give Cameroons to France in exchange for all of Togo and Dahomey;²²
- iv) The British Resident intimated that former German Kamerun would "either come within the purview of the League of Nations or in the event of the League never becoming an accomplished fact, it will become an integral part of Nigeria;"²³ and,

17 Sir Hugh Charles Clifford (born in March 1886 and died in December 1941) served the British government as Acting Governor of British Ceylon from July 1907 to August 1907; he was Governor of Gold Coast, December 1912-April 1919-November 1925; Governor of British Ceylon, November 1925-June 1927; and, Governor of the Straits of Settlement, 1927-1929.

18 Winston S. Churchill (born in November 1874 and died in January 1965). He was British Secretary of State for War and Secretary of State for Air from 1919 to 1921; he was Colonial Secretary in 1921; Prime Minister of Britain from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955.

19 Jide Osuntokun "Anglo-French Administration of the Mandated Territory of the Cameroons, 1923-1939: A study in comparative Administration," *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Ibadan, 12, 3 (April 1978), 257.

20 Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War* (London: Longman, 1979), 231.

21 Frederick John Dealtry Lugard (born in January 1858 and died in April 1945) was a soldier and colonial administrator who played a significant role in British colonial history. He served in East Africa, West Africa and Hong Kong. He was Governor-General of Nigeria from 1914 to 1919. He authored the celebrated *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*.

22 Emmanuel M.L. Chiabi, "Background to nationalism in Anglophone Cameroon, 1916-1954" (Ph.D dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1982), 54.

23 Ibid., 77.

- v) Britain wanted to tidy up her Nigerian boundary and as Alfred Milner²⁴ acknowledged: "the territory we have gained, though not large in extent, has a certain value in giving us better boundaries and bringing completely within our borders native Tribes which have hitherto been partly within British territory and partly outside it."²⁵

There is no doubt that France was very satisfied with the generous "gift" from Britain and Henri Simon²⁶ did not hesitate to let Alfred Milner know, according to Lovett Elango, "that France would be accommodating with regard to Kamerun since, in any case, she [France] had nine-tenths of the territory."²⁷ On the other hand, Harcourt expressed his displeasure to the British Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith,²⁸ stating that he was:

Aghast at the decision of the War Committee... to hand over Duala as well as the rest of the Cameroons to the French....It is all the more amazing that no attempt seems to have been made when making to France this tremendous gift, to settle any of the other outstanding questions such as Togoland, the New Hebrides and Jibuti.... I cannot tell you how strongly I feel on this matter...."²⁹

Milner, however, regarded the partition of Cameroon as "not a bad one"³⁰ and Simon "conceded that the territorial issue had been settled very largely in favour of France."³¹ In the final analysis, the British wanted the part of former German Kamerun which they got because she wanted "something to bargain with." The British "wanted only a bargaining chip which, as it eventually turned out, was one that was sufficient to improve Nigeria's strategic position as well as to enable Britain to bargain for all former German colonies in southern Africa."³² Britain, definitely, wanted to blunt the French criticism that she suffered from a "land hunger disease and while she [Britain] had been collecting the spoils of war all over the world, France had been bleeding to death... [on]

24 Alfred Milner (born in March 1854 and died in May 1925) was High Commissioner in South Africa from 1897 to 1905; War Secretary in April 1918 and Colonial Secretary from 1918. He retired in 1921.

25 Gardinier, "The British in the Cameroons," 523.

26 Henri-Simon (born in February 1866 and died in May 1956) was French Minister of Colonies.

27 Elango, *The Anglo-French Condominium*, 99.

28 Herbert Asquith (born in September 1852 and died in February 1928) was prime Minister of Britain from 1908 to 1916. He took Britain and her empire into the 1914-1918 First World War.

29 Elango, *The Anglo-French Condominium*, 98-99.

30 Ibid., 101.

31 Ibid., 102.

32 Ibid.

the Western Front.”³³

British Southern Cameroons was administered by Britain as part of the Southern Provinces of the Protectorate of Nigeria until 1947. In 1947, the territory was administered as one of the Provinces of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. British Southern Cameroons, following the Richards Constitution, was located as follows: on the coast between the Cross River on the West and the Mungo River on the East; French Cameroon was on the East and Nigeria was on the West. In 1938, Southern Cameroons had a population of 445,755 inhabitants (see Table I below). The Nigeria (Protectorate and Cameroons) Order-in-Council 1946 in Section 6 stipulated that “the portions of the Cameroons which lie to the northward, and the portions of the Cameroons which lie to the southward... be administered as if they formed part of the Northern Provinces of the Protectorate and of the Southern Provinces of the Protectorate [of Nigeria] respectively.” The Southern Cameroons initially comprised four Divisions: Victoria, Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda.

Table I: Administrative Divisions of British Southern Cameroons in 1938

Division	Area in Sq Miles	Adult Males	Adult Females	Children	Total Population	Density per Square Mile
Victoria	1,166	27,268	10,854	8,666	46,788	40.1
Kumba	4,162	21,466	23,687	25,251	70,404	16.9
Mamfe	4,321	21,323	24,080	22,738	68,139	15.8
Bamenda	6,932	68,311	88,050	104,061	260,422	37.6
Total	16,518	138,368	146,671	106,714	445,755	26.88

Source: NAB, Ba (1938)2 File No. 2457. Cameroons Province: Notes for the League of Nations Report, 1938, 11.

The Bamenda Division was subsequently split into three divisions: Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe, making a total of six divisions (see Map II below). In administering British Southern Cameroons as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, the British colonial authorities used the system of Indirect Rule which became operational in the territory in 1922. Indirect Rule rested on the authority and dexterity of the traditional rulers for the system to be successful. Without powerful and influential traditional rulers

33 Ibid., 97.

in the forest zone of Southern Cameroons, the British relied on the German-created “artificial” chiefs. But, the situation was different in the Bamenda Grassfields with the existence of powerful traditional chiefs (Fons) such as in Bali, Bafut, Kom and Nso. The Bangwa also enjoyed the existence of a strong and influential traditional authority similar to what existed in the Bamenda Grassfield of Southern Cameroons and the Western Grasslands of the Bamileke country in French Cameroon. In summary, the British applied the system of Indirect Rule because “it would have been obvious folly, without unlimited knowledge of local authorities to attempt drastic reforms which would dislocate traditional administration.”³⁴

Map II: British Southern Cameroons



The colonial authorities accepted the “indigenous administrative or authority units as the basis of colonial administration” and the chiefs and fons who were “so organized as units of local colonial administration” were styled Native Authorities (NAs) or Native Administrations (NAs).³⁵ In working in close collaboration with the colonial administration, the NAs had a Native Court and Native Treasury. The Native Courts were established in Southern Cameroons in conformity with the 1914 Nigeria Native Courts Ordinance. The Nigerian Legal system was extended to the British Cameroons

34 Cameroons Province: Notes for the League of Nations, 1938 (1938), 2, File No. 2457, 11, National Archives, Buea (NAB).

35 HNA Enonchong, *Cameroon Constitutional Law: Federalism in a Mixed Common-Law and Civil law System* (Yaounde: CEPER, 1967), 54.

by the British Cameroons Administration Ordinance No. 3 of 1924 which replaced the German Legislation. The first Nigerian Law which was applied in Southern Cameroons was the "Land Law of the British Cameroons Administrative Ordinance of 1925" which borrowed heavily from Northern Nigeria; this led to the mistaken assumption that chiefs/fons in Southern Cameroons, with the possible exception of Bali given its assumed "conquest," had property in all so-called "tribal lands" which gave them rights they could dispose of willy-nilly.

Although Indirect Rule worked well in Southern Cameroons, it was not without its disadvantages. Some of its disadvantages included:

- i) The emerging westernized elites felt that it gave too much responsibility and influence to local traditional rulers, most of whom were out of touch with the art of modern statecraft of governance;
- ii) It offered the westernized elites little or no opportunity to participate in the system;
- iii) It failed to encourage the development of parliamentary democracy;
- iv) The NAs in Southern Cameroons varied, broadly speaking, between what obtained in the forest zone and in the grassfield zone because traditional societies in the forest zone were loosely organized while they were centralized in the grassfield zone and Indirect Rule worked better in highly centralized traditional societies; and, finally,
- v) The local authorities elevated some individuals, especially in the forest zone, to the status of chiefs who had no traditional right to the title.

In order to reduce or minimize the inherent tension between the traditional rulers and their people, "subjects," on one hand and the westernized elites on the other, the colonial authorities established village and clan councils. In creating NAs, the fons of Bali, Kom, Bafut, Bum, Nso and Bangwa were recognized as NAs. Similarly, four chiefs in the Victoria, Buea and Mamfe districts were recognized as NAs. By 1940, the apparent success of the Indirect Rule system was ascertained by the fact that almost all the known "tribal" and traditional divisions in Southern Cameroons were grouped into NAs. Meanwhile, in 1922, Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of Nigeria, had promulgated the Nigeria (Legislative Council) Order-in-Council of 1922 into law and it went operational in 1923. It is popularly known in Nigerian constitutional development as the Clifford Constitution; and, it eventually stirred up the spirit of nationalism in Southern Cameroons.

The Clifford Constitution replaced the old Nigerian Council with a Legislative Council and provided for the election of African representatives into the Legislative Council.

The constitution exempted the Northern Provinces of Nigeria from the competence of the Legislative Council; this, unfortunately, aggravated the fragmentation of Nigeria for it undermined the unity of Nigeria. However, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria and the Senior Residents of the Northern Provinces sat on the Legislative Council as members of the Executive Council. For the Southern Cameroons, however, the constitution did not provide for the territory to be represented in the Legislative Council although it legislated for the colony, the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Cameroons under British mandate. Out of the Legislative Council's nineteen African members, none was from the British Cameroons.

The non-representation of Southern Cameroons in the Legislative Council provided fodder for the Cameroons Welfare union (CWU). The CWU used it as one of the numerous grievances that had to be addressed. In March 1942, after the CWU had petitioned the British colonial authorities, Chief J. Manga Williams³⁶ of Victoria was nominated by the British administration as the representative of Southern Cameroons in the Legislative Council.³⁷ The Senior Resident in Southern Cameroons was nominated as an *ex-officio* member representing the territory in the Legislative Council and he also represented the territory in the Executive Council in Lagos. But for the political pressure from the CWU, it is appropriate to argue that the British administration did not initially treat Southern Cameroons as worthy of relevant constitutional advancement.

Stirring up Nationalism in Southern Cameroons between the Wars and After

The German annexation of Douala in 1884, their subjugation of several and various ethnic groups, their expansion and consolidation into what became known as German Kamerun with a political "doctrine" and administration between 1884 and 1916 created the sense of a Cameroonian identity. The "Cameroonian Identity" was popularized as the *Kamerun Idea*. The administration of British Cameroons between 1916 and 1961 as

36 John Manga Williams (born in 1877 and died in 1959) was the grandson of King William (Bile) of Bimbia from whom Alfred Saker bought a piece of land in 1858 and named it Victoria in honour of Queen Victoria of Britain. Manga Williams schooled in Victoria and he was later appointed District Head of Victoria by the Germans. After WW1, the British took control of part of former German Kamerun, British Cameroons; and in 1946, Manga Williams was given the Order of the British Empire (OBE). After the creation of the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC), Manga Williams was appointed a Member of its Board. He was a member of the Southern Cameroons Chief Conference and a Native Authority Member of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. He founded the Cameroons Indigens Party (CIP).

37 Kalu Ezera, *Constitutional Developments in Nigeria: An Analytical study of Nigeria's Constitutional-Making Developments and the Historical and Political Factors that Affected Constitutional Change* (Cambridge; The University Press, 1964), 34.

an integral part of Nigeria, especially between 1922 and 1960, never made the people of Southern Cameroons to feel as being Nigerians. This was especially so because they were unambiguously called "Cameroonians" and referred to themselves as "Cameroonians": British Cameroons; British Southern Cameroons; British Northern Cameroons; and, French Cameroon for the French sphere of former German Kamerun.

The defeat of the Germans in the First World War and the arbitrary partition of former German Kamerun into British and French Cameroons created enormous economic, social, cultural and political hardships and hurdles between the peoples in British and French Cameroons who had, prior to the 1916 partition of German Kamerun, interacted "freely" economically, socially, culturally and politically between 1884 and 1916. This was felt by the ethnic groups and more so by those who owned businesses and plantations which were split. The erection of all sorts of barriers by British and French administrators in British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon respectively stirred up the flame of nationalism among the westernized elites who galvanized the population in favour of a Cameroonian "nation." In the 1930s and 1940s, the British and French policies in the administration of their respective sections of Cameroon and the effects of the Second World War brought to the fore, initially in a latent manner, the rejection of the partition of former German Kamerun; and, the need to reunite the partitioned territories gained currency. For instance, the chiefs of Bimbia and Douala championed the reunification of British and French Cameroons because of their ethnic and common lineages, so also were the traditional rulers of Kumba, Bakossiland, Buea and Victoria.

After the Second World War, some Southern Cameroonians who had fought in the war returned home and criticized Britain and France for having drawn up boundaries separating "tribes and even relatives."³⁸ B. Njume, a Southern Cameroonian soldier, wrote to the Southern Cameroons Resident in 1945 that he would "like to call your [the Resident] attention to the idea of a UNITED CAMEROON UNDER ONE RULE" [Emphasis is original].³⁹ Njume went on to emphasize that "every fighting man and civilian of this country lay hopes for a better united Cameroons... after the war."⁴⁰ In

38 Martin Kilson, "Introduction: Modes of Adaptation," in *The Africa Reader: Colonial Africa*, (eds.) Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 74.

39 Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 11-12.

40 Anthony Ndi, "The Second World War in Southern Cameroons and its Impact on Mission-State Relations, 1939-50." In *Africa and the Second World War*, (eds.) David Killingray and Richard Rathbone (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1986), 214.

a similar vein, Southern Cameroons students in Great Britain and Ireland formed an association in 1951 called the Association of Cameroon Students of Great Britain and Ireland. One of the primary goals of the association was to “contact our brethren on the other side of the border, including students studying in France” in order to “facilitate [the] political union [of British and French Cameroons] when the time comes.”⁴¹

The pro-reunification stance was given an official recognition by the Southern Cameroons governing class when the Leader of Government Business, Dr. EML Endeley, in his “National Day Message to school children of the Southern Cameroons” on 26 October 1955 said:

On the 26th of October 1953, the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly came into being....You will know that the Cameroons, together with that part now being administered by the French, is a big country with a population of just over five million....When therefore, you talk of the Cameroons, you should not only think in terms of that part which we now call the Southern Cameroons, but as the unit which existed before 1914. There is a widespread and genuine desire for re-unification....⁴²

Dr. EML Endeley’s pro-reunification position in the “National Day Message” was in conformity with his initial overt constitutional/political position on Southern Cameroons. During the Third Annual Convention of the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC) that held in Kumba, 28-30 April 1953, under the Chairmanship of RJK Dibonge,⁴³ Dr. EML Endeley entered the hall with “a bag of stones and alluded to

41 Reply to Resident from NA 87698, special Wireless Coy (D) WA signals, SE as a Command, dated 25/2/45, sign. B. Njume. Pa (1941) 8, NAB

42 Victor E. Mukete, *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification with Authentic Letters of Key Players* (Yaounde: Eagle Publishing, 2013), 104.

43 Robert Jabea K. Dibonge (born in October 1896 in Douala and died in 1974 in Tiko) was a member of the Akwa clan in Douala. He was one of the most enlightened young elites during the period of German administration in Cameroon. In 1911, he won the coveted Governor Puttkamer Prize as the brightest student in Cameroon. He was very fluent in his mother-tongue, Duala, and in German, English and French. He moved to the Southern Cameroons in 1918 and joined the British colonial civil service in Buea and rose to the rank of Chief Clerk in Enugu, Nigeria. He helped in the creation of the CWU, the French Cameroons welfare Union (FCWU), the Cameroon National Federation (CNF) and the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC). In 1953, the KUNC and the CNF merged and formed the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) with Dr. EML Endeley, amongst others. He was one of the pacesetters of Southern Cameroons politics. Although he was initially a supporter of reunification, he supported Dr. EML Endeley’s secret agreement with the Action group (AG) of Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Western Region. The secret agreement which was signed in

the fact that he was stoned in Nigeria because he called for the separation of Southern Cameroons from Nigeria.” Dr. EML Endeley’s insistence at the convention on separating from Nigeria and reuniting with French Cameroon was enthusiastically well received.⁴⁴

Despite the flame of nationalism and the call for a return to the situation of Cameroon as it was between 1884 and 1916, broadly speaking, it was not all smooth-sailing for the reunification ship. In Southern Cameroons, the British administration was alarmed by the reunification drive and in 1951 EJ Gibbons sent a secret report to the Chief Secretary to the Government in Lagos suggesting proposals to stifle the reunification cause. Gibbons wrote that Southern Cameroons should be occupied with:

the practical and immediate fruitful task of advancing the interests of their people within the existing constitutional framework than with the pursuit of an aim such as the unification of the two Cameroons, which obviously ought not to become a practical issue until [at] a very much later stage in the development of West Africa.⁴⁵

A similar situation existed in French Cameroon on the reunification palaver. The *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) which was created in 1948 in Douala was a fervent and uncompromising supporter of immediate independence and reunification. On the other hand, the *Bloc Démocratique Camerounais* (BDC) of Dr. Louis-Paul Aujoulat⁴⁶ was initially hostile to the pro-reunification message. In like manner, and more vigorously, the *Démocrates Camerounais* (DC) of André-Marie Mbida⁴⁷ rejected reunification and argued that the reunification of the two Cameroons was of no importance to the political evolution of French Cameroon. In spite of the rise of nationalism and the popularity of the reunification position, constitutional and political advancement in

1954 tied Dr. EML Endeley and his KNC to the AG and, ipso-facto, Southern Cameroons search for independence in association with Nigeria. According to Victor E. Mukete, Dibonge “betrayed the Douala people and the reunification cause, by supporting Dr. Endeley’s u-turn campaign in favour of integration of Southern Cameroons to Nigeria,” see Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 503.

44 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 91-97.

45 Cameroons Unification Movement (KUNC), File No. V1757, Vb/b (1951)1, NAB.

46 Louis-Paul Aujoulat (born in August 1910 and died in December 1973) was a French politician and a missionary doctor. He once served as the French representative to the World Health organization (WHO). He went to Cameroon in 1953 and became very influential on the political stage in French Cameroon. He founded the Bloc Démocratique Camerounais (BDC).

47 André-Marie Mbida (born in January 1971 and died in May 1980) was a member of parliament of the French National Assembly. He was the first premier of French Cameroon from May 1957 to February 1958. He founded the *Parti des Démocrates Camerounais* (PDC). He went into exile in Cairo and Conakry. He returned to Cameroon in 1960 and was arrested in 1962 for alleged conspiracy against the Cameroon government. He was released in 1965.

Southern Cameroons was set in motion by some catalytic factors during and after the Second World War.

Catalysts of Constitutional Developments in Southern Cameroons

The Second World War unleashed forces and factors that influenced constitutional developments in Southern Cameroons. These forces and factors, with far-reaching ramifications, were both internal and external. Although the CWU was the trail blazer, the outbreak and consequences of the Second World War unleashed unstoppable forces that eventually led to the territory's independence upon its joining French Cameroon (Republic in Cameroon in 1960) in October 1961.

Internal Forces

Impact of World War II

The defeat of Germany in the First World War and its expulsion from Cameroon did not obliterate the admiration Cameroonians of the German era had of Germany. Some Southern Cameroonians were enlisted in the British colonial army and went as far as South East Asia to fight against the Axis. The German propaganda machine was very effective in Southern Cameroons in dissuading some Southern Cameroonians from fighting alongside Allied troops.

The success of the German propaganda was vividly captured in a correspondence by the Chief Secretary, Lagos, to the British Resident in Bueain 1940 when he said: "If by any means the [Germans] were to come...[to Southern Cameroons] and try to take this place, I doubt what chances we have of gaining the cooperation of the natives."⁴⁸ The indigenes preferred working in the German-owned plantations than fighting in support of the British. As a matter of fact, out of a total population of 400,000 inhabitants, only 3,500 enlisted in the British colonial army while the plantations employed more than 25,000 workers.⁴⁹ Southern Cameroonian soldiers returned home after the war with new political aspirations for the territory, less awe of Europeans and an enhanced sense of nationalism. The war also affected the indigenes economically.

The British colonial administration increased its control over the territory's economy to ensure the availability of raw materials for Britain's war machine and population. For instance, in 1943, the Wild Rubber Order was promulgated which required all able-

48 Ndi, "The Second World War in Southern Cameroons," 214.

49 Ibid., 210.

bodied males to provide 3lbs of rubber per head per month.⁵⁰ The hardship which was occasioned by the war brought the abject British economic and social neglect of Southern Cameroons to the forefront and this was seized by the growing intelligentsia. In criticizing the British policy, Southern Cameroons emerging westernized elites quickly embraced the goals of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC)

The pioneer Southern Cameroons politicians acquired their political *savoir-faire* from the NCNC. The NCNC's membership was opened to organizations and not to individuals. Founded in August 1944, Southern Cameroons associations and/or political pressure groups quickly joined the NCNC: the Cameroons Youth League (CYL),⁵¹ the Cameroons Federal Union and the Cameroons National Federation (CNF).⁵² The founders of these groups who became members of the NCNC included Dr. EML Endeley, Paul M. Kale, John N. Foncha, Samson A George, Nerus N Mbile and Laban N Namme. Mbile and Namme of the CYL and later of the CNF represented Southern Cameroons in the cabinet of the NCNC at various times. One of the aims of the NCNC was "to afford the members the advantage of a medium of expression in order to secure political freedom, economic security, social equality and religious toleration" in Nigeria and Southern Cameroons as a member of the British Commonwealth.⁵³ The NCNC became the conduit for the spread of nationalism and the demand for political emancipation in Nigeria and British Cameroons.

The NCNC was conscious of the very difficult position which British Cameroons found

50 Simon-Joseph Epale, *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975: A Study in Agrarian Capitalism* (New York: Vantage Press, 1985), 127.

51 The Cameroons Youth League (CYL) was founded in March 1940 by PM Kale, Dr. EML Endeley and John N. Foncha. The motto of the CYL was "Unity and Cooperation." It aimed in redressing the political, economic and social grievances of British Cameroonians regardless of sex. It was headquartered in Lagos and had a monthly bulletin called Cameroons Youth League Newsletter. The CYL left the political scene following the creation of the Cameroons National Federation in 1949.

52 The Cameroon National Federation (CNF) was created in May 1949 by Dr. EML Endeley and it grouped together about twenty tribal unions including the Bakweri Land Committee (BLC), the French Cameroons Welfare Union (FCWU) which was founded by RJK Dibonge in 1949, the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) Workers' Union and the Baminyang Improvement Union. The CNF advocated separation from Nigeria and ultimate reunification with French Cameroon.

53 *The Constitution of the NCNC* (Lagos: NCNC Publication, 1945).

itself. This was explicitly stated by Dr. Azikiwe in his address at the party's convention of 30-31 August 1951 at Nnew Hall, Kano. In the address, Dr. Azikiwe enumerated three peculiar problems which confronted British Cameroons given that the territory comprised "various ethnic or linguistic elements [who] desire to be integrated with their kith and kin, wherever they are disintegrated."⁵⁴ According to him, the three problems were:

The Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship seeks to co-exist with Nigeria on a Federal basis with its own separate executive and legislature; residents in the British Cameroons who originated from the Cameroons under French Trusteeship complain that, in spite of their domicile in the British territory and that they pay rates and taxes like their counterparts, they are denied the basic right of franchise as guaranteed under the new [Macpherson] constitution; the demand by Cameroonians for [re] unification of British and French Cameroons with a view to accelerating political advancement....⁵⁵

These three problems dominated British Cameroons quest for independence from the second half of the 1950s until British Southern Cameroons achieved independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon in October 1961 while British Northern Cameroons achieved independence by joining the Federation of Nigeria in June 1961. Meanwhile, in 1948, a political party, the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) was founded in French Cameroon.

The UPC Factor

The UPC, formed in 1948, advocated the immediate independence and immediate reunification of British and French Cameroons. The party influenced the political consciousness of Southern Cameroons politicians and its radical nationalist pronouncements scared both French and British colonial authorities in the two Cameroons but more especially in French Cameroon. The UPC met the CNF in Kumba in 1949 and agreed to work towards the reunification of British and French Cameroons. Although the UPC stood for immediate reunification, the CNF called for immediate evolutionary reunification.

54 National Headquarters of NCNC, *Forward To Freedom and Progress, National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons: Report of Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the NCNC Held at Kano on August 30 and 31, 1951* (Yaba, Nigeria: Zik's Press Limited, 1951), 9.

55 Ibid.

In 1951, during the formation of the pro-reunification Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC), Ernest Ouandie and Abel Kingue of the UPC met with RJK Dibonge and NN Mbile of the KUNC. During the meeting, while the UPC delegates called for the likelihood of using violence, the KUNC called for the relaxation of frontier restrictions between the two Cameroons and rejected violence.⁵⁶ Um Nyobe and Kingue of the UPC met with a KUNC delegation in Tiko in August 1952 and later in 1952, a KUNC delegation met with the UPC in Edea. The UPC flirted with the KNDP and it participated in Southern Cameroons politics until it was banned and its leaders expelled from the territory in 1957. The One Kamerun (OK) party led by Ndeh Ntumazah took over the UPC political platform in Southern Cameroons. It should be underscored that before the advent of party-politics in Southern Cameroons, political pressure groups and trade unions dictated the waves of politics in the territory.

Pressure Groups and Trade Unions

The first political pressure group to set the tone in addressing political grievances in Southern Cameroons was the CWU when it petitioned the non-representation of Southern Cameroons in the Nigeria Legislative Council. In March 1940, the CYL was created and together with the CWU, they “articulated the broad interests of the trust territory as such; but this initially took the form of claims for greater autonomy, at least for Southern Cameroons.”⁵⁷ An important pressure group in Southern Cameroons politics and more especially in the forest zone was the Bakweri Land Committee (BLC).

The BLC’s main objective was its demand for the retrocession of ownership of Bakweri Lands which the Germans had confiscated for the erection of plantations between 1887 and 1916. In 1946, the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) was created to manage the plantations in the best interest of the Bakweri and all British Cameroonians. The membership of the BLC “cut across all strata of Bakweri society since the land issue was of concern to all Bakweri.”⁵⁸ The BLC was led by a new class of westernized political elites such as Dr. EML Endeley and PM Kale. It became involved in several political actions and it petitioned the 1949 UN Visiting Mission “with placards and signs clamouring for their Lands.”⁵⁹ In addition to the pressure groups, workers in the

56 Interview with NN Mbile, Kumba-Cameroon, 18 March 1989.

57 Willard R. Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmented Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 117.

58 Richard A. Goodridge, Activities of Political Organisations: Southern Cameroons, 1945-61” in *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State, 1961-1972: A Critical Study*, (ed.) Victor Julius Ngoh (Limbe: Design House, 2004) 19.

59 United Nations, report of the First Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory of Cameroons Under British Administration (New York, 1950), 6.

plantations in Southern Cameroons formed workers' unions. The harsh war conditions, high inflation and shortages of local foodstuffs as a result of the Second World War facilitated the formation of workers' unions.

When the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) went operational in January 1947, the workers formed the CDC Workers' Union and quickly challenged the European management for better working conditions and wages. In 1947, the CDC Workers' Union called on its members to strike in protest against the corporation's delay in the payment of arrears of wages and salaries.⁶⁰ Its most celebrated strike action took place from November to December 1949. The workers demanded better working conditions and a raise in their daily wages. The success of the CDC Workers' Union in the November-December 1949 strikes increased its prestige and the workers became much more conscious of their political strength and collective bargaining power especially in an environment of the British neglect of the territory. The workers were also able to identify their leaders and some of them, Dr. EML Endeley and NN Mbile for example, became prominent politicians in Southern/West Cameroon.

British Neglect

The British administration of Southern Cameroons as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria after 1947 worked to the political, economic, social and educational disadvantage of Southern Cameroons. The absence of good roads; absence of post primary educational institutions; absence of acceptable health facilities; and, inadequate administrative services led Samson A. George to decry the situation in the House of Representatives at Lagos in 1953 that "essential administrative services" in Southern Cameroons "were maintained on a skeleton basis" while the populations "were semi-educated, attending such schools as poor funds of the native authorities could provide."⁶¹

Generally speaking, the neglect of the development of the territory was cushioned by some of the administrative reforms which indirectly helped in fostering the spirit of national consciousness in the "illiterate masses." For instance, in 1949, the Bamenda Division was split into three divisions (Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe) and grouped under the Bamenda Province while Victoria, Kumba and Mamfe divisions were grouped under the Cameroons Province. The NA Areas were amalgated into large administrative sub-units in the form of federations. The unintended immediate consequence of these administrative reforms was the emergence of "national consciousness" given that most

60 Epale, *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon*, 173; interview with NN Mbile, Kumba-Cameroon, 18 March 1989.

61 Tambi Eyongetah and Robert Brain, *A History of the Cameroon* (London: Longman, 1974), 133-134.

of the illiterate masses were able to think and reason in terms of large administrative sub-units.

In the administrative reforms, British colonial authorities had to grapple with the reality that Southern Cameroons was administered, for convenience, as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria and this greatly impacted on the politico-constitutional advancement of the territory. The British “neglect” did not only affect the territory’s socio-economic and political developments, but the British covert and, at times, subtle policy of tailoring the territory’s march to independence to culminate with the territory’s attainment of independence in “association with Nigeria” also complicated and compounded the question of the territory’s quest for independence. In deciding the political future of Southern Cameroons, the British did not regard the wishes of the inhabitants as being of paramount importance.

In August 1953, BOB Gidden of the Colonial Office (CO), in replying to a question from SA George, said that “There was no obligation [in the UN Trusteeship Agreement]... [for Britain] to base all its actions on the wishes of the people, and that factor alone, during the period preceding self-government or independence.”⁶² In August 1959, the Acting Commissioner of the Cameroons, HN Milne, at the Mamfe Plebiscite Conference reminded Southern Cameroons politicians that “the best friends of ... [Southern] Cameroons do not foresee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than continued association” with Nigeria.⁶³

Southern Cameroons-Nigeria Connection

The British administration of Southern Cameroons as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria after 1947 facilitated the movement of Southern Cameroonians to the Eastern Region as well as their stay in that region and in Nigeria as a whole. Southern Cameroonians went to Nigeria as students, businessmen and women, petty traders, journalists or employees in many of the firms in Nigeria. Southern Cameroonians who were educated in Nigeria kindled nationalism and political consciousness in Southern Cameroons. These Southern Cameroonians included Dr. EML Endeley, Solomon T. Muna, PM Kale, John Ngu Foncha, Samson A. George, Isaac Malafa and NN Mbile; and they were enchanted by the political ideas and pronouncements of the President of the NCNC, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

62 Constitutional Position of the Cameroons, “Notes of a meeting with Dr. Endeley.” CD 554/283, File No. WAF 39/87/01, The National Archives, (TNA). London.

63 Southern Cameroons information Service, Buea “Full text of an Address by the Acting Commissioner of the Cameroons, Mr. NH Milne, At Mamfe on Monday August 19th 1959,” Press release no. 421, August 1959, NAB. Southern Cameroons Information Service, Buea, henceforth cited as SCIS, B.

According to PM Kale, "the growth of politics in the Cameroons followed the rising tide of nationalism in West Africa and Nigeria" and Dr. EML Endeley said that Southern Cameroonians "who, with a better assimilation of English Education and Culture were able to associate fully with and emulate Nigerian leaders..." returned "home to kindle the first flames of nationalism or political consciousness in [Southern] Cameroons."⁶⁴ The Southern Cameroons-Nigeria connection also enabled thousands of Nigerians, especially Igbos, to move to Southern Cameroons where they worked in the Civil Service (legal profession, medical profession, education, etc), and as traders or plantation workers. In 1958, Nigerians comprised about 30 per cent of the plantation work-force in the territory; in 1961 Nigerians accounted for 12 per cent of the civil servants in the territory; and, 85 per cent of the commercial business in Southern Cameroons were controlled by Nigerians, mostly Igbos.⁶⁵ In 1949, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe remarked that "it would appear that the god of Africa has created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages...the Igbo nation cannot shirk its responsibility from its manifest destiny."⁶⁶

Such statements and the predominance of Igbos in the Southern Cameroons created a strong dislike for Nigerians especially Igbos and gave the nationalist movement in Southern Cameroons "more of an anti-Igbo, anti-Nigerian than anti-British character."⁶⁷ This was more so because Southern Cameroonians were more in contact with Nigerians in their day-to-day activities than with the British. The end-result was that Southern Cameroons was sometimes, in a derogatory manner, referred to as "a colony within a colony." The Southern Cameroons-Nigeria connection had a positive influence as some Southern Cameroonians worked in several Nigeria media newspapers such as the *West African Pilot*, *Daily Times* and magazines like *Drum*. The media, broadly speaking, provided an opportunity for political pressure groups, political parties and trade unions to ventilate their messages and also enabled young Southern Cameroonians to learn and sharpen their journalistic skills.

The Southern Cameroons-Nigeria connection was, however, the most complicated variable. Although Southern Cameroons was administered as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria after 1947, the decision was purely British because neither Nigerians nor Southern Cameroonians were consulted. Naturally, some Nigerians and

64 Paul M. Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons* (Buea "Government Printer, 1967), Preface.

65 Quoted in Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism in Anglophone Cameroon," 339.

66 Ndiva Kofele-Kale, *Tribesmen and Patriots: Political Culture in a Poly-Ethnic Africa State* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 39.

67 *West Africa Pilot* (Lagos), 8 July 1949.

some Southern Cameroonians did not approve of it. In Nigerian politics, the Northern Region, represented by the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), was not comfortable with the decision because a permanent administration of Southern Cameroons as part of the Eastern Region would alter the balance of political power in Nigeria to the detriment of the Northern Region. The NPC wanted Southern Cameroons to be separated from Nigeria.

The Western Region led by the Action Group (AG) and the Eastern Region led by the NCNC wanted Southern Cameroons to be part of Nigeria, but for different reasons. The AG wanted Southern Cameroons to be identified with the Western Region but since the territory was identified with the Eastern Region, the AG wanted Southern Cameroons to be given a separate Regional Government. Because of the pull from the AG and the NCNC, Southern Cameroons politicians were split into three groups: those who allied with the NCNC to achieve the territory's association with Nigeria; those who allied with the AG to achieve the territory's association with Nigeria; and, finally those who rejected any Nigerian connection or association. Given the Nigerian context, Southern Cameroons political leaders who supported association had to walk a tight rope as they explained the political wisdom of their respective choices. In addition to the internal forces which rekindled political awareness and ultimately constitutional developments in the territory, the inhabitants were also motivated and encouraged by external factors. The external factors influenced mostly the educated Southern Cameroonians since only they could appreciate and analyse events outside the territory. The external forces were: the administration of Southern Cameroons as a UN Trust Territory; the anti-colonial position of the USA, the USSR and the Afro-Asian Bloc; and, student unions/associations.

External Forces

Southern Cameroons as a UN Trust Territory

In 1946, the discredited League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations Organization (UNO) and all the mandated territories of the League of Nations which were not yet independent became trust territories of the UN except German South West Africa (Namibia). The former League of Nations mandated territories such as British Cameroons and French Cameroons became UN Trust Territories. Unlike the League of Nations mandate which did not explicitly demand the mandatory powers to administer the inhabitants of the territory towards self-government or independence, the UN explicitly required the powers concerned to administer the inhabitants towards self-government or independence. Article 76 (b) of the UN Charter called on the Administering Authorities to:

Promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development *towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its people and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned...* [Emphasis added].⁶⁸

Britain and France, as Administering Authorities of British Cameroons and French Cameroon respectively, were, therefore, called upon to administer the inhabitants towards self-government or independence.

In implementing Article 76(b) of the UN Charter, the inhabitants were authorized to directly petition the Secretary-General of the UN or through their Administering Authority; that is, either the UK or France, as the case may be. The petitions were in the form of telegrammes, letters, memoranda or other documents containing requests, complaints and/or grievances. Between 1946 and 1960/61, the UN sent four Visiting Missions to Southern Cameroons and the inhabitants were given the opportunity to present their problems directly to UN officials. The UN Visiting Missions toured the territory in 1949, 1952, 1955 and 1958.

In the execution of Article 76(b), it became obvious that the politicians of Southern Cameroons encountered difficulties: what was the difference between self-government and independence and when and how were they “matured” for either self-government or independence. According to VG Fanso:

The UN Charter established no criteria for determining which of the political objectives—self-government or independence—would be most appropriate for a colonial or trust territory. Nor did it specify whether the particular circumstances of the territory or the expressed wishes of the people take precedence in determining the political future of the particular territory.⁶⁹

Similarly, questions such as: what determined the particular circumstances? Was it the political advancement of the people or the economic/financial advancement/viability of the territory or both? It was partly because of such unanswered questions that some

68 Gardinier, “The British in the Cameroons, 1919-1939,” 554.

69 VG Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges: from prehistoric times to the twenty-first century*, Revised and updated Combined Edition (Kumbo-Cameroon: Team Work Press, 2017), 265.

Southern Cameroons politicians led by Augustine Ngom Jua could not understand why a “smaller” country like Gambia could be granted independence as a separate territory and Southern Cameroons could not.⁷⁰ In a similar vein, Victor E Mukete⁷¹ questioned if the refusal of the British to grant independence to Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity was because of the size of the territory and/or its financial insolvency.⁷²

In order to address the ambiguities, the UN subsequently issued resolutions clarifying how independence could be achieved and how the wishes of the people could be ascertained. With regard to the “independence issue,” UN Resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and UN Resolution 1541 (XV) 15 December 1960 provided that “inadequacy of political, economic, social or education preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.”⁷³ UN Resolution 1541 (XV) in Principle VI stipulated that a non-self-governing territory could attain self-government either by:

- i) Emerging as a sovereign independent state;
- ii) Free association with an independent state; or

70 Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 41.

71 Victor Esemisonga Mukete (born in November 1918 and died in April 2021) was the Paramount Chief of the Bafaw in Meme Division . He was Senator and *doyen d’age* in the Cameroon Senate from 2013 until his death on 10 April 2021. He was educated in the Government School, Kumba, 1926 -1932; Government College Umuahia, 1933-1938; Higher College Yaba; University of Manchester, 1948-1951; and, Christ’s College, Cambridge University, 1951-1952. He was one of the founding members of the Association of Cameroon Students of Great Britain and Ireland which staunchly called for the reunification between French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroons. He was an agriculturalist and botanist with a B.Sc. degree in Agriculture.

On his return to Southern Cameroons, he entered politics and was the Secretary-General of the Kamerun National Congress (KNC). In 1955, he was Nigerian Federal Minister without Portfolio; and, he was the Minister of Information, 1958-1959, in the Nigerian Federal Government of Tafawa Balewa. He was a reunificationist to the core and never wavered even during the blackest days of the Anglophone crisis which erupted in 2016. He was appointed Chairman of the Board of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) which he held from 1960 to 1982. He was a former Member of the Economic and Social Council of Cameroon and former Vice-President of the Cameroon Chamber of Commerce, Mines, Industry and Crafts. In 2013, he was appointed Senator in the Cameroon Senate by President Paul Biya, an office which he held until his death. He abdicated the throne as the Paramount Chief of the Bafaw in August 2020 and handed over to Ekoko Mukete, one of his five sons. He wrote the most authoritative history on the reunification story of Southern Cameroons titled: *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification With Authentic Letters of Key Players*. He was Grand Officer of the Cameroon Order of Valour.

72 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 422.

73 Victor Julius Ngoh, *The Untold Story of Cameroon reunification, 1955-1961* (Limbe: Presprint plc, 2011), 35.

iii) Integration with an independent state.⁷⁴

The substance of Principle VI was clearly spelt out in Principles VII and VIII which “qualified” achievement of independence through either “association” or “integration” to be: “on the basis of complete equality between the peoples of erstwhile Non-self-Governing Territory and those of the independent country with which it is integrated. The peoples of both territories should have equal status and rights.”⁷⁵

The question of ascertaining the “wishes of the people” was addressed in UN General Assembly Resolution 1352 (XIV) of 16 October 1959 which spelt out that the wishes would be ascertained through a plebiscite and the questions were:

- 1) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria? OR
- 2) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon?

UN Resolution 1352 (XIV) also stipulated “that only persons born in the Southern Cameroons, or one of whose parents was born” in the territory was eligible to vote.⁷⁶ The Resolution provided “that the Administering Authority in consultation with the Government of Southern Cameroons take steps to implement the separation of the administration from that of the Federation of Nigeria not later than October, 1960.”⁷⁷

In order to ensure the full implementation of Article 76(b) and UN Resolution 1352 (XIV), the UN Trusteeship Council issued Resolution No. 2013 (XXIV) asking the Administering Authority, the UK, to:

Make appropriate steps in consultation with the authorities concerned to ensure that the people of the territory are fully informed, before the plebiscite, of the constitutional arrangements that would have to be made, at the appropriate time, for the implementation of the decisions at the plebiscite.⁷⁸

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 SCIS, B, “House of Assembly Debate: Motion on Plebiscite Questions and Qualifications, 9th September 1959,” *Press Release No. 468*, NAB.

77 SCIS, B, “Resolution to Postpone Plebiscite for a year tabled before UN Assembly,” *Press Release No. 498*, 10 October 1959, NAB.

78 Vb/n/1960/5, Administrative Department, Premier’s Correspondence, Southern Cameroons, NAB.

At the UN, the catalyst for political emancipation was dictated by anti-colonial forces like the United States, the Soviet Union and the Afro-Asian Bloc. At the end, Fanson is absolutely right when he states that "the shift from the mandate to the trusteeship system marked a milestone in the political and administrative development of Cameroon."⁷⁹

Anti-colonial Position of the USA, USSR and the Afro-Asian Bloc

The Second World War was regarded by many informed Americans as the death of colonialism. In 1941, for instance, Wendell Willkie made a seven-week tour of Allied countries as US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Special Representative and declared in China that the Second World War "must mean an end to the empire of nations over nations" and he went on to call for a "firm time-table under which colonial peoples can work out and train governments of their choosing."⁸⁰ Wendell Willkie, an American lawyer and the 1940 Republican nominee for the President of the USA, advocated an end to colonialism. In 1943, he published his manifesto, *One World*, in which he espoused his anti-colonial position.

Willkie admonished colonial powers arguing that "the rule of people by other people is not freedom and not what [the US] must preserve." But, Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill, on his part, stated forcefully that: "Let there be no mistake in any quarter, we intend to hold what we have. I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."⁸¹ The impact of the Second World War on the decolonization process in Southern Cameroons and the desire for self-government were vividly captured by the District Officer (DO) of the Bamenda Division. In a correspondence to the Resident of the Cameroons Province, the DO intimated that there would be a demand by "educated Africans for a greater share in the government of their own country through development of parliamentary institutions."⁸² The Soviet Union, like the USA, adopted an anti-colonial posture which worked to the advantage of the decolonization process in Southern Cameroons.

The official policy of the Soviet Union was very critical of capitalism and colonialism. Southern Cameroonians came into contact with the communist anti-colonial ideology after the formation of the UPC in 1948. The UPC, as mentioned earlier, held several meetings with the KUNC in Kumba in 1951 and Tiko and Edea in 1952. The UPC also flirted with the KNDP and later with the OK in advancing its position of immediate

79 Fanson, *Cameroon History*, 266.

80 Joseph Barnes, *Willkie* (New York: n.p., 1952), 299.

81 *The Times* (London), 11 November 1942.

82 Future Political Development of Nigeria and Southern Cameroons 1940, Va/d (1940)1, NAB.

independence and immediate reunification. The anti-colonial policy was also supported in the UN by the Afro-Asian Bloc which was “composed of a number of states which were dependencies in years past” and this bloc was “restive over the slowness of the progress made within the trusteeship system toward self-government” and wanted it to be speeded up.⁸³ The bloc was against the balkanization of Africa and supported the concept of Pan-Africanism. In addition to these external forces, Southern Cameroonian students in Great Britain, Ireland and in West African universities formed unions/associations advocating independence and in some cases reunification.

Student Unions/Associations

The decolonization process in West Africa, as in other parts of Africa, was also promoted by students in the UK and other countries. In West Africa, the students in the UK founded the West African Students' Union (WASU) in 1952 in their drive for independence or self-government in their respective countries. The goal of WASU was two-fold: provide a forum for West African students in London; and, promote the understanding of African culture. Its main activity was the drafting of memoranda for constitutional reforms in West Africa and the colonial authorities paid close attention to its activities.

In 1951, Southern Cameroons students in Great Britain and Ireland formed the Association of Cameroon Students in Great Britain and Ireland. The Association discussed the possibility of reunification between British and French Cameroons and exchanged ideas with French Cameroon students in France. In addition to the Association of Cameroon Students in Great Britain and Ireland, Southern Cameroons students in West African universities especially in Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone formed the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) to propel the decolonization process in the territory. These Southern Cameroons students' associations and unions played a tremendous role in the territory's search for independence. In an attempt to grasp the complex and complicated nature of Southern Cameroons tortuous march towards independence, it should also be underscored that the “tortuous march” occurred within a political climate that was dominated by the Cold War and Cold War politics.

Conclusion

It has been stated that before the annexation of the Duala by the Germans in 1884, the people lived in “independent” chiefdoms, kingdoms or communities. The British

83 Stephen S. Goodspeed, *The Nature and Function of International Organisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 520.

were initially reluctant to annex Douala and its people which led Germany to annex the territory. The Germans, after the annexation, expanded the area between 1884 and 1916 to “create” German Kamerun. Contrary to views held by some Cameroonians, the British never acquired a territory known as Southern Cameroons between 1858 and 1887. The defeat of Germany and the arbitrary partition of former German Kamerun into British and French spheres later set in motion, after the Second World War, the demand for independence by the people of British Southern Cameroons. The territory was administered by Britain on behalf of the League of Nations and later the United Nations. In the quest for independence, the people were faced with three options as discussed in the subsequent chapters.

NEGOTIATIONS ON INDEPENDENCE

Introduction

The final outcome of Southern Cameroons negotiations for its independence was dictated by several factors which ultimately led to the Anglophone Problem and Crisis. These factors were: the inability of Southern Cameroons political leaders to agree on the political future of the territory without foreign influence or intervention; the absence of trust and the existence of suspicion which Southern Cameroons politicians nursed against each other; and, the interests of Britain and France. The tortuous march was undertaken amidst Cold War politics as the fear of communist influence loomed in the air during Anglo-French discussions on French Cameroon and British Cameroons and more especially on British Southern Cameroons.

Lack of Political Consensus

The quest for Southern Cameroons independence was fraught with difficulties because politicians failed to arrive at a consensus without foreign intervention. In the process, the foreign players did not act as honest facilitators given their own interests in the territory. Southern Cameroons politicians were confronted with three options: independence as a separate political entity; independence in association with Nigeria; and, independence by joining French Cameroon. In spite of the fact that independence as a separate political entity was initially and erroneously thought to be the most popular as expressed by the fons and chiefs in 1956, Southern Cameroons politicians could not agree on it. There was no popularly known public support for it, and it was eventually discarded as an option. The politicians were left with the options of *association* with Nigeria and *reunification* with French Cameroon which would be decided through a plebiscite.

Once more, Southern Cameroons politicians could not agree on the plebiscite questions which prompted Christopher Eastwood¹ of the Colonial Office to prophetically caution that:

1 Christopher Gilbert Eastwood (born in April 1905 and died in October 1983) was a member of the British civil service and joined the Colonial Office in 1927. He was Private Secretary to the High Commissioner for Palestine from 1932 to 1934 and was once the Private Secretary to George Lloyd. He was Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office from 1947 to 1952 and again from 1954 to 1966. He attended the Yaounde Tripartite talks in August 1961 on the discussion of the constitution of the federal republic of Cameroon.

It would be a tragedy if through [the Southern Cameroons leaders'] failure to agree among themselves or state forthrightly what their wishes and demands are, the United Nations was to force on the people of the Southern Cameroons a choice which only a tiny minority of the people want.²

The final plebiscite questions which were drafted at the UN in 1959 drew strong condemnations from PM Kale's Kamerun United Party (KUP)³ and even from some members of the governing KNDP of John Ngu Foncha.

Absence of Trust and Existence of Suspicion among Southern Cameroons Politicians

The unity and sense of purpose which hitherto characterized Southern Cameroons politicians in their collective request for a separate region for Southern Cameroons and their criticism of the Richards Constitution collapsed after the Macpherson Constitution and the birth of party-politics in the territory. The decision by Dr. EML Endeley to secretly abandon the reunification goal following his secret alliance with the Action Group (AG) of Awolowo in 1954, without the knowledge of Victor E. Mukete who was the Secretary General of the KNC, was just the tip of the iceberg. RJK Dibonge of the KUNC and later of the KNC who had earlier championed reunification secretly allied with Dr. EML Endeley on the 1954 secret alliance with the AG. The secret agreement/alliance called for the independence of Southern Cameroons in association with Nigeria as an ally of the AG. In return, the AG would finance the political activities of the KNC in Southern Cameroons.

Privately, Dibonge in April 1953 suspected Dr. EML Endeley of being disloyal to the reunification goal. Before the creation of the KNC in 1953, Dibonge wrote to Victor E. Mukete on 12 April 1953 on the "Benevolent Neutrality"⁴ question stating:

One thing we must make sure... is to see to it that the Endeley gang gives us a written undertaking that they will under no circumstances abandon this

2 C. Eastwood to Sir James Robertson, Lagos draft, June 1959, CO 554/1756, TNA, quoted in Mélanie Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2012), 24-25.

3 The Kamerun United Party (KUP) was founded in February 1959 after the January 1959 general elections which the KNDP won 14 seats and the KNC/KPP Alliance won 12 seats. It was founded by the Leader of the KPP P.M. Kale who did not want to join the KNC as a member or in a KNC-KPP merger. The KPP split because Kale rejected the idea that the KNC should merge with the KPP "under the leadership of a legislator" who was Dr. E.M.L. Endeley.

4 The issue of "Benevolent Neutrality" involved the nine southern Cameroons representatives to the Eastern House of Assembly in Nigeria who agreed to steer clear of Nigerian politics while the other four agreed to work with the NCNC. The nine who formed the Benevolent Neutrality Bloc were led by Dr. EML Endeley while the four who refused were led by NN Mbile.

new policy [of Benevolent Neutrality] without prior and full consultation and approval with the [Southern] Cameroons (electorate)... that he and his colleagues will under no circumstances whatever join any Nigerian political party in the future.⁵

But, in 1954, Dibonge and Dr. EML Endeley signed a secret alliance with the AG of the Western Region of Nigeria.

In October 1956, John Ngu Foncha made a secret request to the *Union Nationale* of Paul Soppo Priso⁶ of French Cameroon asking for financial assistance for the KNDP "because we are working truly for [re]unification and hope that our brothers in Eastern Kamerun will give us the necessary help." Foncha further stated in his request that "the KNDP is the biggest party in the Southern Cameroons which is working for [re-] unification."⁷ This came at a time when Southern Cameroons traditional rulers, chiefs and fons, in their meeting in Bamenda in 1956 had rejected both "reunification" with French Cameroon and "association" with Nigeria saying that they wanted neither "water" nor "fire."⁸

The lack of trust and the existence of deep-seated suspicion among Southern Cameroons politicians were also evident in the series of articles and correspondences which were meant to discredit Dr. EML Endeley by a team of staunch reunificationists led by Chief Abel Mukete, Tamajong Ndumu and Jacob A. Kisob with the help of a printing press provided by Soppo Priso.⁹ The liaison officer at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference, R. Ashwell, failed to appreciate Victor E. Mukete's sincerity in his pro-reunification position and thought that he supported the pro-association stance of the KNC. Ashwell reported that Victor E. Mukete could "not all together [be] trusted" in his

5 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 69-70. It was believed that Dr. EML Endeley was forced to accept the "Benevolent Neutrality" policy by "the powers that be and that he had been threatened with dismissal if he persists in his refusal to desert the NCNC" (Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 69.) Dr. EML Endeley was a member of the Council of Ministers in Lagos where he was Minister of Labour.

6 Paul Soppo Priso (born in 1913 and died in 1996) was a fervent reunificationist and a very wealthy businessman. He founded the *Jeunesse Camerounaise Française* (JEUCAFRA) in 1938, in 1952, he was elected into the Territorial Assembly of French Cameroon and in 1953 he was the President of the Territorial Assembly. He was a co-founder of the *Mouvement d'Action Nationale Camerounaise* (MANC) in 1956. He was one of the financiers of the KNDP in support of reunification. He retired from politics in the early 1960s.

7 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 466; also cited in Ngoh, *The Untold Story*, 11.

8 Kale, *Political Evolution*, 69.

9 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 452-454.

support of association.¹⁰ But, Victor E. Mukete was a staunch advocate of reunification and he never shied away from it.

The existence of suspicion among Southern Cameroons politicians was replayed by the refusal of John Ngu Foncha to table the draft constitution, which was given to him by Ahmadou Ahidjo in Yaounde in May 1961, at the Bamenda All-Party Constitutional Conference in June 1961.¹¹ ST Muna explained that Foncha feared that the opposition CPNC party would de-rail the discussion between Foncha and Ahidjo should the contents of the draft constitution be made public to the Southern Cameroons delegates.¹² It was expected that the Southern Cameroons delegates to the Bamenda All-Party Constitutional Conference would discuss the draft federal constitution in preparation for the July 1961 Foumban Constitutional Conference. The end-result was the unpreparedness of the Southern Cameroons delegates for the Foumban Conference.

The mistrust and suspicion could not be dispelled even after the agreement and the signing of a “truce” between the KNDP and CPNC in April 1961 in New York which was re-affirmed on 11 May 1961 in Buea. This was especially so after the Foumban Conference when the CPNC was not invited to participate in any of the meetings or conferences which Foncha and his team (Southern Cameroons) and at times alone held with Ahidjo and his team (Republic of Cameroon) to map out the process towards reunification in keeping with UN Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961.

Anglo-French Interest

The interests of Britain and France towards Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon which, at times conflicted significantly, impacted on the outcome of the Southern Cameroons negotiation on and for independence. Both Britain and France opposed Southern Cameroons independence as a separate political entity for different reasons. Britain wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve independence in association with Nigeria and rejected any notion of a separate independent Southern Cameroons; an idea which was floated by some Southern Cameroons politicians especially John Ngu Foncha and Paul M. Kale in varying forms and degrees. In rejecting the idea of separate independence for Southern Cameroons, the British Colonial Office (CO) said that Southern Cameroons “would be a poor weak country;” and, it would be “unable to

10 Constitutional Conference Arrangements, Vc/1959/1, File No. DC 710, NAB.

11 Daniel Abwa, *Cameroun: Histoire d'un nationalisme 1884-1961* (Yaounde: Editions CLÉ, 2010), 380; Nghoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present*, 229-230; Fanson, *Cameroon History*, 334; and, Anthony Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps*, Vol. One (Bamenda: Paull's Press, 2013), 230-233.

12 Interview with ST Muna, Ngyen-Mbo, Mbengwi, Momo Division, Cameroon, 10 March 1990.

stand alone and would have to accept whatever terms were offered to them.”¹³ Britain, thus, rejected Southern Cameroons independence as a separate political entity: be it definite or transitory.¹⁴

The French policy of Assimilation, on the other hand, was geared towards French Cameroon achieving independence in the French Union. As late as April 1959, the French did not envisage Southern Cameroons reunifying with French Cameroon. Similarly, as late as 1958, the British were also against reunification and, according to Mélanie Torrent, Britain was ready to “ask the [1958 UN] visiting mission to accept the plebiscites in principle, and the choice with Nigeria or [Southern Cameroons] independence.”¹⁵ But, both the British and French made a *volte-face* and eventually supported reunification as one of the options. The French felt that the 1959 general elections, which the KNDP won, was a blank cheque to Foncha to gun for reunification. The French argued that any plebiscite option without “reunification” as one of the questions “would be strongly resented in the French Cameroons and would make great difficulties for the French position there.”¹⁶ But, a better understanding of the complex and difficult situation which Southern Cameroons politicians faced in deciding the political future of the territory can only be appreciated with knowledge of the Richards Constitution.

The enactment of the Richards Constitution in 1946 should serve as the take-off date in understanding the complex and various factors that dictated Southern Cameroons negotiations on independence; the several constitutional conferences; the meetings; and, the political crises (the Eastern Regional Crisis and the Kano Riots) in Nigeria. The Richards Constitution was heavily influenced by Sir Bernard Bourdillon’s¹⁷ ideas on political reforms in Nigeria. The Richards Constitution replaced the defective 1922 Clifford Constitution and it went operational on the 1st of January 1947.

Richards Constitution to Macpherson Constitution

The Richards Constitution was framed to address three objectives, namely: promote the unity of Nigeria; promote adequately, within that framework, the interests of diverse el-

13 Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 26.

14 Ibid., 25.

15 Ibid., 22. It is interesting to note that the British talked of plebiscite options of “association” with Nigeria and “independence” as a separate entity and not “association” and reunification.”

16 Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 24.

17 Bernard Henry Bourdillon (born in December 1883 and died in February 1949) was a British colonial administrator. He was Governor of Uganda from 1932 to 1935 and Governor of Nigeria from 1935 to 1943.

ements which constituted Nigeria; and, finally, secure greater participation by Africans in the management of their own public affairs. Nigeria was divided into three regions: the Eastern, Northern and Western Regions. The Centre had an Executive Council in Lagos and each of the regions had a Regional Executive Council and a Regional House of Assembly (Council). At the Centre, the Executive and Legislative Councils were the two governing bodies. The Executive was the Governor-General and the Legislative Council represented the whole of Nigeria and the British Cameroons trust territory. Southern Cameroons was administered, for administrative convenience, as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The Chief Executive of the region was the Lieutenant Governor. The Richards Constitution, for the first time, integrated North and South Nigeria into one Nigeria legislative council.

The Richards Constitution provided for a Provincial Meeting whose specified number of representatives was elected from the Divisional Meetings from amongst their own members. The Provincial Meeting of the Eastern Region elected ten Provincial Unofficial Members of the Eastern House of Assembly; Southern Cameroons was reserved two seats in the House of Assembly which were occupied by Chief J. Manga Williams of Victoria and Fon Galega II of Bali. In spite of the apparent good intentions of Governor Richards, his constitution drew severe criticism from both Nigerians and Southern Cameroonians. With regard to Southern Cameroons, the people who were directly affected had no input in the drafting of the constitution. The constitution failed to address the Southern Cameroons request for a separate region.

Most importantly, Southern Cameroons lost its single seat in the Nigeria Legislative Council which it had under the Clifford Constitution. Although the Richards Constitution gave Southern Cameroons two seats in the Eastern House of Assembly, the two seats could not compensate for the non-representation of the territory in the Legislative Council which was the main Legislative body for the whole of Nigeria and the British Cameroons. Enonchong aptly describes the limitation of the constitution vis-à-vis Southern Cameroons as: “the absence of a separate regional organization for the Cameroons” within Nigeria; “absence of direct representation in the Legislative Council;” and, “absence of the separation of any budgetary affairs of” Southern Cameroons.¹⁸

18 Enonchong, *Cameroon Constitutional Law*, 58.

In August 1947, an NCNC delegation led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe¹⁹ and including PM Kale travelled to London to present the complaints of Nigeria and Southern Cameroons to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Rt. Hon. Arthur Creech Jones.²⁰ PM Kale, in the meeting with Arthur Creech Jones in London, decried the absence of Southern Cameroons representation in the Legislative Council. He also raised the issues relating to the Bakweri land problem in general in Southern Cameroons; the acute lack of educational facilities in Southern Cameroons; and, a regional status for Southern Cameroons.

The complaints from Nigeria and Southern Cameroons were rejected by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Southern Cameroons request for a regional status was rejected because "the Cameroons was a Trust Territory... [that] was incorporated in the political and economic life of Nigeria."²¹ But Arthur Creech Jones advised the NCNC delegation to return home and give the constitution a chance by collaborating with the successor of Richards, John Macpherson.²² In August 1948, Macpherson surprised Nigerians and Southern Cameroonians in his first address to the Legislative Council when he stated that: "it is the wish of the country, [that] constitutional changes be made... in the second three year period which will start at the beginning of 1950."²³ The British colonial authorities decided to consult the masses unlike during the drafting of the Richards Constitution. This decision was well received in Southern Cameroons and several Provincial Meetings were held in the territory especially when an "Outline of the Richards Constitution" was sent to British Cameroons for discussion.

The unfailing request was the creation of a separate Region for the Cameroons. A provincial meeting was held in Mamfe in June 1949 and delegates were elected to represent Southern Cameroons at the Enugu Regional Conference in July 1949 to study the recommendations of the Provincial Meetings and "give further consideration to the

19 Nnamdi Azikiwe (born in November 1904 and died in May 1996) was popularly referred to as "Zik." He was an outstanding Nigerian politician and statesman. Dr. Azikiwe studied in the USA and returned to Nigeria and became the locomotive behind Nigeria's independence. He was the founder of the NCNC and had a number of newspapers. He was the Governor-general of Nigeria from 1960 to 1963 and Nigeria's first President from 1963 to 1966.

20 Arthur Creech Jones (born in May 1891 and died in October 1964) was a conscientious objector in World War I. he was secretary of State for the Colonies from 1945 to 1950.

21 Kale, *Political Evolution*, 34.

22 John Stuart Macpherson (born in August 1898 and died in November 1971) was governor of Nigeria from 1948 to 1954 and Governor-General of Nigeria from 1954 to 1955. He was responsible for the revision of the Richards' Constitution which led to the Macpherson Constitution of 1950/51 to 1953.

23 Ezera, *Constitutional Developments in Nigeria*, 87.

question of constitutional advance.”²⁴ The Enugu Regional Conference politely rejected Southern Cameroons request for a separate region because it would be difficult, the Conference argued, to organize a separate Region given the position of the British Northern Cameroons Trust territory. In January 1950, delegates from the Eastern, Northern and Western Regions and the Lagos-Colony met at the Ibadan General Constitutional Conference.

At the Ibadan General Constitutional conference, Dr. EML Endeley argued for a separate region for Southern Cameroons but this was, once more, rejected. At the end, the proposals for reviewing the Richards Constitution were adopted and in July 1950, it was replaced by the Macpherson Constitution following its approval by the Secretary of State for Colonies, Sir Arthur Creech Jones. The Macpherson Constitution provided certain provisions for Southern Cameroons: four of the 34 seats which were allocated to the Eastern Region in the Federal House of Assembly were assigned to Southern Cameroons and 13 of the 80 seats in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly were allocated to Southern Cameroons.

All in all, Southern Cameroons was given seats in the Eastern Regional House of Ministers, the Federal House of Representatives and the Federal Council of Ministers. Out of the 13 Southern Cameroons representatives, four were for the Federal House of Representatives of which one of the representatives was in the Federal Council of Ministers; of the remaining nine seats in the Eastern House of Assembly, one of the representatives was in the Eastern Council of Ministers. Through the Macpherson Constitution, Britain, in administering Southern Cameroons as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, tried to enforce an association between Southern Cameroons and the Eastern Region of Nigeria; and, by extension, an association between Southern Cameroons and Nigeria. The Macpherson Constitution was criticized by Southern Cameroons politicians because it failed to grant the territory a separate region. Dr. Azikiwe, the National President of the NCNC, lambasted the Macpherson Constitution because it was imposed on Nigeria and British Cameroons “in the form of a Carthaginian treaty.”²⁵

Macpherson Constitution and the Eastern Regional Crisis

In the implementation of the Macpherson Constitution, a candidate had to be nominated in writing by two other members of the Electoral Meetings and the candidate had to deposit £10 in respect of his candidature. The Macpherson Constitution gave Southern

24 Ibid., 108.

25 National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, *Forward to Freedom*, 7.

Cameroons thirteen seats which were distributed as follows: Victoria Division (two seats), Kumba Division (two seats), Mamfe Division (two seats), Wum Division (two seats), Nkambe Division (two seats) and Bamenda Division (three seats). In December 1951, elections were held in Nigeria and Southern Cameroons according to the Macpherson Constitution and Southern Cameroons eligible voters elected their Thirteen Representatives.²⁶ On 5 January 1952, the thirteen Southern Cameroons representatives pledged, in Enugu, to work under the banner of the NCNC.

The life span of the Macpherson Constitution was short-lived because of the January-May 1953 Eastern Regional Crisis.²⁷ The Benevolent Neutrality Bloc boycotted the

26 The December 1951 elections led to the election of the following thirteen representatives Dr. EML Endeley and Peter N. Motomby-Woleta from Victoria division; Nerius N. Mbile and R.N. Charley from Kumba division; Samson A. George and MN Foju from Mamfe division; Jeremiah C. Kangsen and Sama Chi Ndi from Wum division; JT Ndze and AT Ngala from Nkambe division; and, Vincent T. Lainjo, Solomon T. Muna and John Ngu Foncha from Bamenda division.

27 The political crisis in Eastern Regional House of Assembly in 1953 is popularly known as the Eastern Regional Crisis. In the Eastern Regional House, the NCNC was the ruling party but its leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, was a member in the Western House of assembly where the Action Group (AG) of Chief Obafemi Awolowo was the ruling party. Azikiwe was an NCNC member in the Western house of Assembly because the NCNC won all the five Lagos seats. In the Western House, Azikiwe led a weakened Opposition and he was less powerful in both the central House of Representatives in Lagos and the Eastern Regional House in Enugu.

In 1952, Azikiwe proposed to reshuffle the eastern Regional Government and in January 1953, his proposal was accepted and all the Eastern Regional Council of Ministers resigned as requested. In the new eastern Regional Council of Ministers, only three (MI Okpara, MC Agwu and Solomon T. Muna of the Southern Cameroons) out of nine Regional Council Ministers were retained. The Thirteen Southern Cameroons members united behind the NCNC and became styled the "Cameroons Bloc." However, six of the nine ministers who had earlier submitted their letters of resignation withdrew them and joined the opposition United independence party (UNIP) and formed a minority government. The majority NCNC blocked the passage of several appropriation bills in the eastern Regional House and a political crisis erupted. The Unity of the "Cameroons Bloc" collapsed as nine out of the thirteen representatives decided to steer clear of Nigerian politics and became known as the "Benevolent neutrality Bloc" because they did not want "to prevent the NCNC from pursuing its policy in the way it sees fit." The Bloc also declared that "the best course open to all Cameroons Bloc is that of benevolent neutrality."

Mbile and three other members of the Thirteen" dissociated themselves from the benevolent neutrality Bloc. The Mbile bloc comprised NN Mbile, RN Charley, Sama Ndi and AT Ngala; the other nine representatives were members of the Benevolent Neutrality Bloc. In February 1953, the eastern Regional House of Assembly was adjourned *sine die* but it was reconvened in May 1953. Muna, who was a member of the benevolent neutrality Bloc, was regarded as pro-UNIP and the NCNC opposed the motion to reinstate him as a minister in the Eastern regional Executive Council. The Benevolent neutrality Bloc subsequently severed their connections with the Eastern Region of Nigeria because of the refusal to reinstate Muna since they were "unable to make the wishes of

Eastern Regional House of Assembly because of its refusal to reinstate Solomon T. Muna. According to WG Wilson of the Colonial Office (CO), the reason advanced by the Benevolent Neutrality Bloc was not tenable because Southern Cameroons, as a territory, was not refused representation in the Council but rather Muna as an individual was refused. According to Wilson and rightly so, it was the refusal to grant Southern Cameroons a regional status that was the underlying reason.²⁸ In fact, Dr. EML Endeley sent a petition to the UN in 1953 requesting the creation of a separate region comprising the British Northern and Southern Cameroons. Dr. EML Endeley's 1953 petition to the UN was contrary to the covert British policy. TB Williamson of the CO proposed that British authorities should accustom "the UN to the idea that the British Cameroons are probably not one entity, but a territory divisible into two halves, each with diverse views on its future." He also believed that the UN Trusteeship Agreement gave the British a reasonably free hand in determining the future of British Cameroons by virtue of the "integral part" provisions of Article 5(a). As BOB Gidden of the CO noted in August 1953, the Trusteeship Agreement was "drawn up in such a way that we [the British] could get away with murder but it is a different matter to declare that we have that right."²⁹

It was in this political atmosphere that the Benevolent Neutrality Bloc scheduled a meeting in Mamfe from 22-25 May 1953. At the meeting, the delegates petitioned the Secretary of State for Colonies Oliver Lyttelton,³⁰ asking for the creation of a separate autonomous legislature for the Cameroons under British trusteeship. In a meeting later in Kumba in June 1953, the KUNC led by Dibonge and the CNF led by Dr. EML Endeley merged and created the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) with Dr. EML Endeley as the President and Dibonge as the Patron. Dibonge became the President-General of the KNC; Dr. EML Endeley became the Parliamentary Leader; and, Victor E. Mukete became the Secretary-General. Although Nerius N. Mbile was the Secretary-General of the KUNC, he did not join the KNC because he argued that Dr. EML Endeley was not sincere in his "hands-off" advocacy in Nigerian politics.³¹ Mbile instead called for collaboration with the NCNC. The political stance of NN Mbile and his group was

Cameroons people respected." The Mbile Bloc stood with the NCNC (Review of the Constitution, Vc (1951), 5, file 108, Vol. 2, NAB.

28 Constitutional Position of the Cameroons, File No. WAF 39/87/01, TNA.

29 Ibid.

30 Oliver Lyttelton (born in March 1883 and died in 1972) was a businessman who joined the British government during World war two. He was Minister-resident for the Middle East from 1941 to 1942, Minister of production from 1942 to 1945 and Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1951 to 1954.

31 Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 73.

condemned in Southern Cameroons where they were “heavily vilified and branded as traitors who had ‘sold the Cameroons to Ibos.’”³² Shortly thereafter, Mbile and Kale formed the Kamerun People’s Party (KPP).

The KNC comprised members with conflicting political positions for Southern Cameroons. It included members with four main different political aspirations:

- i) The autonomists wanted a separate region for Southern Cameroons and were led by Endeley;
- ii) The secessionists wanted to break with Nigeria and broadly speaking were led by the traditional rulers;
- iii) The reunificationists wanted reunification with French Cameroons and were led by Dibonge; and,
- iv) Those who did not advocate a clear position and “preferred to be the sounding board of popular opinion” were led by Foncha.³³

It was, therefore, obvious that the KNC with a mixed bag of conflicting political aspirations for Southern Cameroons would, sooner or later, disintegrate as dictated by the political pendulum of the territory and personal political interests of the politicians. The political platform of the KPP with PM Kale as the Leader and NN Mbile as the Deputy Leader called for a separate regional status for Southern Cameroons but within the Nigerian framework. Mbile’s membership in the KUNC and his support for reunification was meant only for the relaxation of border controls for the population of the two Cameroons.³⁴

The failure of Southern Cameroons political leaders (be they of the KNC or the KPP) to clearly state what political future they wanted for the territory complicated discussions on the territory which became very pronounced between 1959 and 1961. Although the KNC, for instance, advocated separation from Nigeria and regional status, Endeley was not forthcoming on the issue during a meeting which he, Ernest Kofele Martin³⁵

32 NN Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story: Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness* (Limbe: Presbook, n.p.), 61.

33 Bongfen Chem-Langhëë, “Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities and the Nationalist Movement 1953-1961,” *Africa Zamani: Revue d’Histoire Africaine-Review of African History*; Nos. 14 et 15 (Juin/June 1984), 150.

34 Interview with NN Mbile, 10 August 2000, Kumba.

35 Ernest Kofele Martin (born in 1906 and died in 1994) was a KNC politician and a Board Member of the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) from 1949 to 1960. He was a member of the Southern Cameroons House of assembly from 1954 to 1957.

and Tamanjong Ndumu³⁶ held in London with Oliver Lyttelton, Gorell Barnes³⁷ and Huijsman of the CO in June 1953. At the meeting, Endeley emphasized that Southern Cameroons wanted a separate regional status but it did not want “to break away from Nigeria but to get independence in the Nigerian framework.” Endeley’s statement led Lyttelton to remark that “the Cameroons would like to be in the position of the lady who was always being wooed but never married.”³⁸

It was within the backdrop of the Eastern Regional Crisis and the May 1953 Kano Riots³⁹ that the growing political awareness of Nigerians and Southern Cameroonians drove home the urgent need to prevent the political fragmentation of the Nigerian polity and a review of the Macpherson Constitution took centre stage. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, invited Nigerians and Southern Cameroonians to London for a review of the constitution from 30 July to 22 August 1953. From Southern Cameroons, Dr. EML Endeley and NN Mbile attended as delegates. JC Kangsen and SA George attended as advisers and with Dr. EML Endeley, the KNC had three members. Mbile attended as a KPP member and as an adviser to the NCNC. The terms of reference for the conference were:

- i) Propose and adopt changes which were required to address the defects of the Macpherson Constitution’
- ii) Consider the various available measures to be effected in order to implement the changes; and ,

36 Tamanjong Ndumu (born in 1921 and died in 1995) was a member of the Kamerun Society and a staunch reunificationist. He was the first Southern Cameroonian civil engineer and was a member of the Association of Civil Engineers of Great Britain. He was once the Director of Public Works in southern Cameroons; Chairman of the West Cameroon Public Commission; chairman of the Board of Directors of Cameroon Bank and Cameroon Air Transport (CAT); and other several State Corporations in Cameroon.

37 Gorell Barnes (born in April 1884 and died in May 1963) was a Liberal British politician. He was the Under Secretary for Air in the coalition government of David Lloyd George from July 1921 to October 1922. He was invested as Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1918.

38 Constitutional Position of the Cameroons, “Notes of a Meeting held in the Secretary of State’s Office at 3p.m on the 22nd June, 1953, “CO554/283, File No. WAF 39/87/01, TNA.

39 The 1953 Kano Riots erupted when Chief S.L. Akintola, an AG minister, toured the Northern region of Nigeria on a campaign swing and his convoy was attacked during a confrontation between Muslims and non-Muslims. When the dust settled, 36 people were dead and 24 wounded. Endeley and Mallam Abba Habib unsuccessfully sought to have an audience in the tense atmosphere with Ahmadou Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto. Endeley’s Land Rover, on his return to Southern Cameroons, was allegedly stoned.

iii) Study the question of self-government for Nigeria in 1956.⁴⁰

In order to address the particular constitutional request from Southern Cameroons, Lyttelton held a confidential meeting on 12 August 1953 with the Southern Cameroons representatives. The aim of the meeting “was to discuss the relation of the Cameroons to the new constitutional arrangements” and he wanted “to hear all the differing views at one meeting.”⁴¹ From the confidential meeting, the following points emerged:

- i) Endeley pointed out that administering the Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria would prevent the territory from achieving self-determination as a separate and distinct political entity;
- ii) Southern Cameroons “did not care what path the Northern sector choose” but its decision should not prevent Southern Cameroons from achieving its political goal;
- iii) the annual sum of £150,000 which was taken from Southern Cameroons for the development of British Northern Cameroons was sufficient to cater for the needs of Southern Cameroons;
- iv) Mbile, although he did not oppose a separate regional state for Southern Cameroons, wanted an expert commission to be appointed to enquire if the territory would be financially viable as a separate region and if the people approved it; and,
- v) Endeley proposed the creation of a Southern Cameroons region with institutions similar to the institutions in Nigeria: a Legislative Assembly, an Executive Council and a representation in the Upper House of the Nigerian Federal Legislature.⁴²

At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that for Southern Cameroons, the British government would:

- i) Create a separate region for Southern Cameroons should the Southern Cameroons electorate approve of it in a general election;
- ii) A Fiscal Commission headed by Sir Louis Chick was appointed to study the financial viability of the territory should it become a separate region; and,

40 Constitutional Position of the Cameroons, “Note of a Meeting with dr. Endeley and other representatives of the Cameroons under United kingdom Trusteeship held by the Secretary of State at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday the 12th August 1953,” CO554/283, File No. WAF 39/87/01, TNA.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

- iii) The conference adjourned to meet again in Lagos in January 1954 to consider the report of the Commission and the result of the general election.⁴³

The December 1953 general election was fought by the KNC and the KPP and the main campaign theme was “granting or not granting regional status to Southern Cameroons.”

Lyttelton Constitution and Southern Cameroons Quasi-Federal State

The results of the general elections were hardly in doubt because the KNC was very popular in Southern Cameroons. The KPP was branded as “an Igbo party” at a time when the Igbos were distasted in Southern Cameroons. In Bamenda division with ST Muna, JN Foncha and VT Lainjo as members of the KNC, the KPP was not able to, in the words of Mbile, make a “bridgehead from which... [they] could develop an attack....”⁴⁴ In Bamenda, the Fon of Nso rejected the KPP request to hold a campaign rally saying: “my people are already confused through listening to too much politics. I refuse you permission to address the Nso population on your KPP story.”⁴⁵ The KNC invoked the Igbo domination and the advantages of a separate regional status for Southern Cameroons: the KNC won 12 seats and SE Ncha who won as an Independent candidate declared for the KNC; the KPP won no seat.

Unfortunately, the Fiscal Commission Report was not favourable to Southern Cameroons as a separate region. According to the Fiscal Commission Report:

A Southern Cameroons Regional Government would not in the years immediately ahead be financially stable without external assistance. In good years it might pay its way with a slender margin, but in lean years it would have a deficit and it would have no reserves to fall back on....⁴⁶

The Commissioner of the Cameroons, Brigadier Edward John Gibbons,⁴⁷ did not totally agree with the Fiscal Commission Report and argued that “in normal years... the

43 Ibid.

44 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 67.

45 Ibid., 68.

46 *Report of Fiscal Commissioner on Financial Effects of Proposed New Constitutional Agreements* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1953), 23-24.

47 Brigadier Edward John Gibbons (born in 1906 and died in 1990) was a British colonial civil servant. In 1949, he was appointed Special resident in Southern Cameroons and later Commissioner of Southern Cameroons in October 1954 and President of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly and Executive Council from 1954 to 1956.

very modestly organized Cameroons region could survive.”⁴⁸ But the report, generally, influenced the British response to the KNC demand as it showed that Southern Cameroons could not develop as a separate region without financial assistance from either Nigeria or Britain or both. The Lagos Constitutional Conference met in January

1954 to deliberate on the December 1953 general elections in Southern Cameroons and the Chick Fiscal Commission Report.

Lagos Constitutional Conference, January 1954

The conference which was chaired by Oliver Lyttelton was faced with three options in relation to Southern Cameroons constitutional development:

- i) Separate Southern Cameroons completely from the rest of Nigeria and Britain would shoulder the entire financial responsibility for the administration of the territory;
- ii) Establish Southern Cameroons as a separate region of the newly proposed Federation of Nigeria and the territory would benefit from federal services; and,
- iii) The Nigerian Government proposed a “Lagos Solution” for Southern Cameroons in which Southern Cameroons would become a federal territory with its own Assembly and Executive Council which would perform all the normal functions of a separate Regional Government and Legislature.⁴⁹

Based on the KNC landslide victory at the general elections and the Chick Fiscal Commission Report, the conference adopted the Third Option and the outcome was a “Quasi-Federal” territory for Southern Cameroons. The new constitution, the Lyttelton Constitution, was adopted and went operational in October 1954. The “status” was a “Quasi-Federal Territory” because:

- i) The Governor-General of Nigeria was part of the Legislature in-as-much-as bills were sent to him for his consent;
- ii) The Governor-General could give direction to the Southern Cameroons government as to the discharge of its executive authority;
- iii) Southern Cameroons Public Service was part of the Federal Public Service of Nigeria;

48 *Report of Fiscal Commissioner*, 23-24.

49 *Ibid.*

- iv) The Leader of the Government was not called Premier but rather Leader of Government Business;
- v) The representative of Her Majesty was not called Lieutenant-Governor but a commissioner;
- vi) While Lieutenant-Governors approved laws passed by their own parliaments, laws of the "Quasi-Federal" territory had to be approved by the Governor-General; and, finally,
- vii) The Unofficial members of the Legislature were called "Executive Council Members" and not Ministers.⁵⁰

The governing institutions in Southern Cameroons, according to the Lyttelton Constitution, were the House of Assembly and the Executive Council. The House of Assembly consisted of the Commissioner of the Cameroons as president; 13 Elected Members; three *ex-officio* members; six representatives of the NAs; and, two representatives of Special Interest or communities which were not otherwise adequately represented. The Executive Council comprised the Commissioner of the Cameroons as President; three *ex-officio* members of the House of Assembly (the Deputy Commissioner of the Cameroons, the Legal Secretary and the Financial and Development Secretary); and, four Unofficial Members of the House of Assembly. The Southern Cameroons House of Assembly (SCHA) first met on 26 October 1954 with Dr. EML Endeley as Leader of Government Business. The members of the Executive Council were Solomon T. Muna, Jeremiah C. Kangsen and Samson A. George.

In December 1954, elections were held in Southern Cameroons in accordance with the Lyttelton Constitution to elect six representatives to the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos. Once more, the KNC won all the six seats: Victor E. Mukete for Kumba, John Mboyam for Nkambe, Lawrence Fonka Shang for Bamenda, Peter A. Ayuk for Mamfe, FNE Ngale for Victoria and Lucas A. Ning for Wum. In January 1955, Victor E. Mukete was appointed Federal Minister without Portfolio. Although Southern Cameroonians were given a "Quasi-Federal" territorial status and not a fully separate region as was requested, it was a much better constitutional arrangement than what had obtained in the Clifford, Richards and Macpherson Constitutions.

50 Eyongetah and Brian, *History of the Cameroon*, 137.



Southern Cameroons Executive Council Sitting in 1954

Sitting from Left to Right: SA George, ST Muna, Brigadier EJ Gibbons, JC Kangsen and Dr. EML Endeley who was Leader of Government Business

The British accepted a “Quasi-Federal Territory” and not a separate regional status because it was the lesser of two evils. The British argued that Southern Cameroons would not be financially viable to sustain a separate regional status. They concluded that the only source of financial assistance for Southern Cameroons, as a fully separate Region, was the United Kingdom. The goal of the British, therefore, was to administer the territory towards its integration with Nigeria. As Gidden of the CO said in August 1955 during a confidential meeting in London: “There was nothing in the basic instruments or in any Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly which required Her Majesty’s Government to develop the Trust Territory as a separate entity...”⁵¹ Little wonder, therefore, that with such interpretations of UN resolutions and instruments relating to Southern Cameroons, the discussions on the territory achieving independence as a separate political entity were empty political and academic exercises as far as the British were concerned. The British mind-set was well fixed against the possibility of a separate regional status or a separate state.

In Southern Cameroons historiography, a group of Cameroonians from the French sphere of former German Kamerun resident in Southern Cameroons contributed enormously to the political conversation in the territory and in the eventual victory of the KNDP in the February 1961 UN-supervised Plebiscite. These French Cameroonians

51 Constitutional Position of the Cameroons “Note of a Meeting with Dr. Endeley.”

in Southern Cameroons were either workers in German plantations, petty traders, small scale plantation owners, government workers, former members of the German colonial police (*polizeitruppe*) or the German colonial troop (*schutztruppe*).

After the 1920s and 1930s, these French Cameroonians and their off springs became known as French Cameroonians resident, “strangers”, in Southern Cameroons. They came from ethnic groups which the 1916 Picot Provisional Partition Line, the March 1916 London Agreement and the July 1919 Milner-Simon Agreement placed in the British sphere of former German Kamerun. However, once the territory achieved its independence, most of them were treated, more or less, as *bêtes-noires* and some became special targets during the Anglophone Crisis in localities such as Ekona Mbenge, Bomaka, Misselele, Wotutu, Mile 16 and certain localities in Meme Division (see chapters five and six).

French Cameroonians Resident in Southern Cameroons

In the course of the active participation by French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons in the territory’s political life either as members or sympathizers of the UPC, KUNC, KNC, KNDP or OK, French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons championed and financed the reunification cause. In so doing, these French Cameroonians, through no fault of theirs, complicated the understanding of the Anglophone Problem. In 1951, Brigadier Edward John Gibbons distinguished five categories of French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons. They were:

- i) Cameroonians (Bamileke, Bamum, Beti, Duala, Bakoko, Bassa and Fang) who were employed in German plantations, the German *polizeitruppe*, the German *schutztruppe* and as labourers in the German colonial administration between 1885 and 1916. That is, before the outbreak of the First World War and the Anglo-French partition of former German Kamerun; some of these Cameroonians never returned to their various ethnic bases in French Cameroon.
- ii) The off springs of French Cameroonians who either owned plantations, businesses or engaged in petty trade or worked in the colonial administration or attended schools in Southern Cameroons; some maintained contacts with their kin and kith in French Cameroon while others did not;
- iii) French Cameroonians whose ethnic groups were split by the partition line and consequently they had ethnic ties on both sides of the border and criss-crossed the boundary. These included the Mbo, Bamileke, Duala, Bangwa, Dschang, Bakossi and Balong;
- iv) French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons who were temporary French

Cameroon immigrants as job-seekers, workers in the various plantations, petty traders, political refugees especially after 1955; and, finally,

- v) Those who escaped forced labour and other associated ills of the French colonial administration in French Cameroon: *corvée*, *prestation* and *indigénat*.⁵²

These French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons were generally referred to as “strangers.”

French Cameroonians who were in Victoria and Kumba Divisions were principally of either the Beti stock (Eton, Ewondo, Manguissa, etc) or Duala, Bassa, Bakoko and Bamileke while in Bamenda Division, the Bamileke and Bamum dominated. Among several grievances which French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons experienced and expressed were the following:

- i) non-involvement in the management of local councils and customary courts;
- ii) refusal to award CDC scholarships to their children; and,
- iii) enfranchisement of French Cameroonians

The absence of French Cameroonians in the local administration was decried in several council areas especially in areas where, demographically, French Cameroonians competed favourably with the indigenous population. In 1949, for instance, the UN reported that there were 4,494 indigenes and 3,451 “settlers” in Victoria Division.⁵³ In the council areas of Tiko, Buea and Victoria, there were more French Cameroonians than indigenes. According to Joseph Nfi, the French Cameroon Welfare Union (FCWU) wrote to the District Officer for Victoria complaining of discrimination and tribalism because “strangers who were paying seventy five percent taxes in the division could not be represented in the local councils.”⁵⁴

In addition to the question of participation in local council administration, French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons complained that their children were denied CDC scholarship especially those children whose parents worked with the CDC. In one of their several petitions, French Cameroonians complained that they “contribute a considerable part of the revenue from which the scholarship awarded to promising Cameroonian youths are financed” and advocated that their children should be given equal opportunities. It was finally agreed in 1951 that children “whose parents [French

52 Joseph L. Nfi, *Celebrating Reunification and the Eleventh Province* (n.p.: n.p., 2013), 2-26.

53 Ibid., 42.

54 Churchill Monono, *Indigenous Minorities and the Future of Good Governance in Cameroon: An Inquiry into the politics of Local Governance in the Local Councils of Fako Division 1866-2001* (Buea: CEREDDA, 2001), 80, cited in Nfi, *Celebrating reunification*, 40.

Cameroonian parents] have been resident in the British Cameroons throughout the child's primary and secondary education" in British Cameroons or Nigeria and were offered admission to pursue secondary education were qualified to apply for the CDC scholarship.⁵⁵

The issue of enfranchisement of French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons was very clear to French Cameroonians in the territory. In the December 1951 general elections in Southern Cameroons, French Cameroonians resident in the territory were denied the vote. But limited "stranger franchise" was provided for "strangers" in Victoria Division who were residents for at least five years, paid taxes and owned a house. In Kumba and Mamfe Divisions, "strangers" who proved that they had a residence in the said division were eligible to vote.⁵⁶ In 1953, Dr. EML Endeley requested the enfranchisement of French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons but Oliver Lyttelton replied that legally, it was a thorny issue.⁵⁷ By 1955, there were about 20,000 French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons and this was a solid and assured voting bloc for any political party that supported reunification. The KNC and Dr. EML Endeley felt that enfranchising French Cameroonians in the territory would deal a popular blow against the Igbo settlers whose voting rights were, at the time, supported only by the NCNC and the KPP.

After 1955, however, Dr. EML Endeley developed cold feet with regard to enfranchising French Cameroonians because he fell out with the UPC. The series of terrorist activities unleashed by the UPC in French Cameroon after it was banned frightened most Southern Cameroonians. In addition, the influx of French Cameroonians, especially the Bamileke, into Southern Cameroons was regarded as tantamount to exchanging the haunting fear of Igbo for Bamileke.⁵⁸ Endeley felt that if French Cameroonians were enfranchised, the UPC would be given a foothold in Southern Cameroons. Furthermore, Dr. EML Endeley signed a secret agreement with the Action Group (AG) of Chief Awolowo to campaign for association with Nigeria through the AG in return for material and financial support from the latter. Finally, Endeley was not anxious to either enable RJK Dibonge secure a seat in the SCHA or see him with a "private army" of French Cameroonian voters.

55 FCWU, File Si (1951) 10, NAB.

56 Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 64.

57 Constitutional position of the Southern Cameroons, "Note of a Meeting with dr. Endeley."

58 Proposals for enfranchising of French Cameroonians resident in the British Cameroons, CO 554/916, TNA.

This point was well articulated by RJK Dibonge in a private letter to Victor E. Mukete dated 3 July 1956. In the letter, Dibonge said:

You will be surprised to learn that our “representatives” in the [KNC] Exco do not tell me anything about the happenings there and I usually get my information ...from third parties, who are their “friends.”...*I am not bothered at all; after all, why should I feel offended when I do not possess any political rights?* There is much in this man’s [Dr. EML Endeley’s] attitude towards me than meets the eye. I know a lot of things many people do not give me credit for....I have it on very good authority...that “British” Cameroons leaders are only using my talent and experience to further their own interests; and that *they are doing all they can to shut off “French” Cameroonians from participating actively in the government of the Southern Cameroons...* [Emphasis added].⁵⁹

Dibonge’s letter to Victor E. Mukete showed the duplicity which characterized politics in Southern Cameroons in the 1950s and later in the 1960s. For instance, Dr. EML Endeley with the knowledge and support of Dibonge (as explained below) had signed a secret KNC/AG Agreement in 1954 without the knowledge of Victor Mukete who was the Secretary-General of the KNC, and Dibonge never told Mukete.

However, later, and in preparation for the January 1959 general elections, French Cameroonians were enfranchised because “ordinary residents who had been in Southern Cameroons for a continuous period of 10 years... were qualified” to vote.⁶⁰ In October 1959, UN General Assembly Resolution 1352 (XIV) in relation to the plebiscite in Southern Cameroons spelt out “that only persons born in the Southern Cameroons, or one of whose parents was born” in the territory should be given the vote;⁶¹ French Cameroonians who fulfilled the condition were also enfranchised.⁶² Before the

59 Reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 130-131.

60 Cited in Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 113.

61 SCIS, B, “Resolution to postpone Plebiscite for a year tabled before UN Assembly,” *Press Release*, No. 498, 10 October 1959, NAB.

62 The decolonization story of Southern Cameroons cannot be complete without understanding the crucial role played by some French Cameroonians resident in the territory and /or their children. Joseph-Henry Ngu (born in 1901 and died in Kumba in February 1961) was one of the prominent leaders of French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons. He was a staunch reunificationist and co-founder of the FCWU who, as a successful businessman and founding member and treasurer of the KNC, later became the treasurer of the KNDP.

Joseph-Innocent Nkamsi was the brain behind the creation of the OK party but because he was not a British protected person, Ndeh Ntumazah was made the president of the OK.

George Belinga Mbaraga (born of Beti parents, Ewondo, in April 1928 in Sasse-Buea) was a staunch

enfranchisement of French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons, the question of “reunification” which was advocated and financed by French Cameroonians eventually split the KNC because Dr. EML Endeley started vacillating on his advocacy in favour of reunification.

Split within KNC and Creation of KNDP

The KNC, as explained earlier, comprised politicians with different political goals

reunificationist who overtly militated in the UPC when he resigned from the government in 1957. He later joined the OK when the UPC was banned in Southern Cameroons. He was a member of the OK delegation to the Fomuban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 where he also represented the interests of French Cameroonians in the territory.

Gottlieb Lobe Monekosso (born in Lagos in November 1928 of parents from Dibombari Duala in the Littoral Region and died in January 2018) was politically active in favour of reunification as a founding member of the Association of Cameroon Students of Great Britain and Ireland where he was the Assistant Secretary.

Boniface T. Nasah (born in Buea in 1934 of parents from Bayagain and died in Buea on 1 March 2023) was President of the Ibadan Kamerun Students Association and campaigned through conferences and meetings in favour of reunification; he is a reunificationist. He is emeritus professor of medicine. He was, at one time, the President of the Commission of Justice and Peace in the Diocese of Buea.

Godfrey G. Dibue (born of Duala parents in August 1915 and died in August 2001) was an active member of the Kamerun Society and a reunificationist.

Simon-Joseph Epale (born in June 1926 in Bonampko in Mungo Division and moved to Buea in 1932 with his parents and died in Bota-Victoria in 1993) was a member of the pro-reunificationist think tank, the Kamerun Society. He was, at one time, the Assistant Financial Secretary of the West Cameroon Government. He was the Secretary-General of the Economic and Social Council of the United Republic of Cameroon.

Paul Sinju (born in Balengou in April 1929 and moved to Tiko in 1939 and died in March 2007) was a very successful businessman who “covertly” supported reunification.

Jonas Powu, “Pa Garanti”, was taken to Bamenda in the 1940s at a very young age. He took up petty trading and eventually became a very successful businessman. He was once the UPC treasurer in Bamenda. “Pa Garanti” died in June 2010.

John Bernard Kaba (born in December 1918 at Balengou and died in October 1978) schooled in Buea. He later studied Accounts and played a major role in the reunification movement as President of the Bamileke Tribal Union.

Paul Bamela Engo (born in October 1931 to Frederick Munbe Engo and Elizabeth Ekoto Nku’u at Ebolowa and died in April 2010 in Yaounde) was educated in Nigeria where his father worked and he later moved to the U.K. to read law. He returned to Nigeria and worked in the Legal departments of Nigeria and Southern Cameroons (1959-1961). He later became magistrate in West Cameroon (1961-1965). He taught at the International relations institute of Cameroon (IRIC) and the School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) before serving Cameroon as a successful diplomat in the UN system. There was also the indefatigable RJK Dibonge, amongst others.

for Southern Cameroons and the absence of trust among the politicians did not help the situation. Dr. EML Endeley was not sincere in his support for reunification while Foncha was not initially an overt staunch reunificationist. RJK Dibonge, the founder of the FCWU who championed reunification as the leader of the KUNC and was instrumental in the creation of the KNC with a reunification platform, was not a firm and committed reunificationist. Dr. EML Endeley, gradually and secretly, drifted away from the reunification stance which had given the KNC landslide victories in the 1953 and 1954 elections.

Unknown to KNC officials and supporters, Dr. EML Endeley received feelers from Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the AG in early 1954 on the possibility of an AG-KNC alliance. The purpose was to form an alliance between the two political parties geared towards Southern Cameroons association with Nigeria in alliance with the AG rather than with the NCNC. In May 1954, Chief Awolowo and Ayotunde Rosiji, the Federal Secretary of the AG, secretly met with Dr. EML Endeley in Buea in Dr. EML Endeley's house and a secret alliance/agreement was subsequently signed between the AG and the KNC in August 1954. According to the "Agreement", the AG agreed to provide financial and logistics support to the KNC and, in return, the KNC agreed to abandon its reunification platform. The KNC, thus, agreed to support Southern Cameroons independence in association with Nigeria and in alliance with the AG.⁶³ Apart from Dr. EML Endeley, the only KNC official who knew of the meeting and the secret alliance was Dibonge; the Secretary-General of the KNC, Victor E. Mukete, was kept in the dark.

The impact of the 1954 AG-KNC alliance on the KNC platform became perceptible in early 1955 when Dr. EML Endeley made some important changes in the KNC without consulting key KNC officials. The changes, amongst others, brought in ST Torimiro, a Yoruba who was a retired Inspector of Police married to a Cameroonian, as the KNC adviser. French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons who contributed enormously in financing the KNC were alarmed with the changes; and, the UPC was stupefied with the new subtle policy of association with Nigeria. During an Executive Committee meeting of the KNC in Chief Abel Mukete's Palace in Kumba, Foncha vigorously objected to Endeley's abandonment of reunification and together with Augustine Ngom Jua, they walked out of the meeting.⁶⁴

Most politically astute French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons, especially UPC militants and sympathizers, wanted to keep the reunification option at the forefront. These French Cameroonians, together with the disgruntled KNC

63 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 430-431.

64 Ibid., 105.

members led by Foncha and Jua, held a secret meeting in the residence of James Ouandie at Three Corners Kumba in May 1955 and founded the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP).⁶⁵ Later in 1955, the KNDP was officially launched in Bamenda, Foncha's political fief. A reunification committee comprising JN Foncha, Ndeh Ntumazah, Dr. Felix-Roland Moumie, Abel Kingue and Ernest Ouandie was set up with Moumie as the President and Foncha as the Secretary.⁶⁶

Later in 1955, in a speech in the SCHA, Foncha explained why he rejected the KNC led by Dr. EML Endeley in the following words: "The party had fallen into wrong hands. That this statement is true can be judged from what is now taking place in the KNC." Foncha went on to deplore the fact that he "could not after several attempts get the faults of the leaders of that party straightened... [out and] the only alternative left for me was to resign."⁶⁷ Foncha decried the fact that:

Members of the KNC executive were gullible, courting the favour of their master [Dr. EML Endeley] for personal gain. The [KNC] meetings were dull because they were centered on one man [Dr. EML Endeley]...the dictator, who would not disclose the agenda, while the executive could not influence Government policy, surrendering all their powers to him.⁶⁸

In a letter from RJK Dibonge to Victor E. Mukete dated 17 June 1955, Dibonge confirmed Foncha's assessment of Dr. EML Endeley in a much more acidic language:

The Congress [KNC] is heading to disintegration: it is already moribund.... I shudder to think what the position would be a few months hence. Believe me, the position is really serious: the KNC is "dying" owing to the treachery of the "Bakweri God" [Dr. EML Endeley]: our party is one now on paper only.... I am really sorry for our spineless Bamenda friends whose sole consideration is the retention of their "ministerial posts": they don't wish to offend their overload, so they must hack him up rightly or wrongly. But I can promise you, they will be the sufferers in the long run....⁶⁹

Dibonge's description of Dr. EML Endeley was definitely surprising given the secret AG-KNC Agreement which he was a party to. PM Kale, however, explained that Foncha

65 Nfi, *Celebrating Reunification*, 80-81.

66 Ibid., 82.

67 Anthony Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps*, vol. one (Bamenda: Paul's Press, 2013), 128.

68 Ibid., 129.

69 Cited in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 117.

decided to create the KNDP on the grounds that the leaders of the KNC had deviated "from the policy of Unification of all the Cameroons."⁷⁰

The KNDP, headed by Foncha with Jua as the visible deputy, adopted a programme that called for the secession of Southern Cameroons from Nigeria. It counted on the support of the traditional rulers and Native Authorities who were disillusioned with Dr. EML Endeley's new policy. In January 1958, the KNDP issued a Statement Policy in Mamfe entitled "What do we gain by Secession?" In the Statement Policy, the leaders of the KNDP provided a 14-Point Programme which indicated what the KNDP stood for. The fourteen points were:

1. We shall avoid to be under independent Nigeria.
2. Opening the door for direct negotiation for foreign enterprise.
3. Creating opportunities for Cameroonians to give their best in developing themselves and their country.
4. It will make Cameroon an identified nation.
5. It will enable Her Majesty's Government to shoulder her responsibilities.
6. It will save the Cameroons from being in the analogous position now experienced by Togoland.
7. It will accelerate the political and economic advancement of the territory, promote social progress and raise better standards of living at our pace.
8. We shall maintain our culture without external interference.
9. It will give us scope to work a principle by which we shall unite all sections of our country arbitrarily torn off by foreign powers.
10. It will help us to see into the financial structure of the Territory and make it possible for the Government to work out financial policies.
11. It will enable us accelerate the Cameroonisation of all departments of public services in the country.
12. It will psychologically inspire the people of the Cameroons to increase productivity through self-sacrifice, building up their country and work speedily towards Independence.
13. The current political advancement of Nigeria has made it imperative for Southern Cameroons to take a definite stand - secession.

70 Kale, *Political Evolution*, 58.

14. It is our cherished plan to secede from the Federation of Nigeria.⁷¹

The KNDP policy platform provided what most Southern Cameroonians wanted to hear politically: secession from Nigeria; speedily work towards independence; reunification of all sections of Cameroon; and, financial and economic solvency. The traditional rulers saw themselves in the KNDP platform; French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons saw themselves in the KNDP platform; UPC militants and sympathizers saw themselves in the KNDP platform; and, the cream of Southern Cameroons intelligentsia, the Kamerun Society,⁷² the KNDP platform.

It is interesting to note the following: the bitterness of Southern Cameroons politicians against each other; the conflicting positions they held for the political future of the territory; the political influence of French Cameroonians ("strangers") resident in the territory; the British constitutional policy towards the territory; and, the behind-the-scene discussions which some Southern Cameroons politicians held with other non-Southern Cameroons players as the territory prepared for constitutional conferences. These factors, individually and collectively, posed serious challenges to Southern Cameroons politicians who were called upon to take important and far-reaching political decisions in an environment dominated by cold war politics and the difficulties of meandering through the cobwebs of world politics by politicians, most of whom did not master the art and complexity of international politics.

Quasi-Federal Territory to Regional Status

The creation of the KNDP in 1955 with the massive support of French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons and the UPC did not signal the birth of a KNDP/UPC alliance; the KNDP was neither a revolutionary nor a radical party. The initial KNDP/UPC political cooperation was a marriage of convenience which collapsed when the UPC was banned in French Cameroon in 1955 and expelled from Southern Cameroons in 1957. The successor of the UPC in Southern Cameroons, the One Kamerun (OK) party, supported the KNDP on issues of reunification. In 1955, the KNDP renewed its call for reunification and argued that secession from the Federation of Nigeria would put "Southern Cameroons in a position to negotiate terms for reunification with the government of any free section of Kamerun which desires it." It added that reunification would "be accomplished by independent sections rather than dependent ones under

71 Ibid., 59.

72 The Kamerun Society had prominent Southern Cameroons intellectuals such as Victor Anomah Ngu, Emmanuel T. Egbe, Ako D. Mengot, Robert E.G. Burnley, Oscar Sona Ebanja, Tamanjong Ndu-mu, S.C. Tamanjong, Nzo Ekangaki, Jacob A. Kisob, Eric D. Quan, Frederick Ndong, S.E. Abangma, Simon-Joseph Epale, Nicholas A. Ngwa, PEN Malafa, Lucas Z. Nkweta, Vincent Nchami, Dr. Alex Gwan-Nulla, Isaac Malafa and Dr. Godfred Dibue.

[the] British or French.”⁷³ In April 1955, the KNC severed its links with the UPC and accused it of attempting to set up a branch in Southern Cameroons to compete with it.

Although Dr. EML Endeley had signed the secret AG-KNC alliance/agreement with Chief Awolowo, he openly flirted with the idea that the KNC was still in support of reunification. For instance, during his National Day Message on 26 October 1955, he delivered a pro-reunification message reminding Southern Cameroonians that “there is a widespread and genuine desire for reunification- a coming together of all the sectors which formed the pre-1914 Union-the Kamerun as the Germans knew it.”⁷⁴ In November 1955, the KNC presented a memorandum to the UN Visiting Mission in which it called for the reunification of the British and French Cameroons, the creation of a House of Chiefs and ultimately self-government. As if not to be left out, the KPP also requested reunification. However, the UN Visiting Mission concluded that but for the KNDP, the KNC regarded the issue of reunification more as a means of achieving greater constitutional developments for the territory rather than a genuine political goal. In 1955, the KNDP informed the UN Secretary-General that Cameroonians wanted the reunification of all Cameroonians and that the wishes of the majority should be respected.⁷⁵

Despite the pro-reunification statements and requests from a cross-section of Southern Cameroons political spectrum in 1955 and 1956, British colonial authorities felt “that there was no reason to anticipate any change in Southern Cameroons adherence to the sterling area” and “whatever might have been said at public meetings or in petitions [to the UN], no responsible suggestions in the House [of Assembly of Southern Cameroons] or elsewhere had ever been made... to leave the Federation of Nigeria.”⁷⁶ Nonetheless, British authorities feared that “during the constitutional review [conference] in Bamenda in May 1956, the KNC leaders... will acquiesce in wild proposals from the rank and file with the intention of enhancing their bargaining power through nuisance value relying all the time on” the British government “to assure them of financial assistance from the Federation [of Nigeria] and the UK.”⁷⁷

73 Movement for the unification of the Two trust territories of the Cameroons: Dr. Endeley’s National Day Message, 26 October 1955, CO554/1055, File No. WAF 33/78/ 02, TNA.

74 Movement for the Unification of the Two trust territories of the Cameroons: KNDP Petition to the UNO Secretary-General, CO554/1055, File No. WAF 33/78/102, TNA.

75 Movement for the unification of the Two trust territories of the Cameroons: A.G.H. Gardiner-Brown to Williamson, 7 March 1956, CO 554/1055, File No. WAF 33/78/02, TNA.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

In a move to prevent this scenario, EJ Gibbons decided to do “some plain speaking in an attempt to induce Endeley” and his supporters “to give a responsible lead to public opinion.”⁷⁸ In order to achieve the British goal, the British colonial authorities decided that Southern Cameroons should remain part of the Federation of Nigeria and they rejected the territory’s demand for “regional Status” and a House of Chiefs; both of which the KNC and the KNDP had requested. It was in this political climate that the Bamenda Conference of May-June 1956 was held to adopt the territory’s common platform for the 1957 London Constitutional Conference.

Bamenda Conference, May-June 1956

The delegates at the Bamenda Conference comprised:

- i) The KNC led by Dr. EML Endeley;
- ii) The KPP led by PM Kale;
- iii) The KNDP led by John N. Foncha
- iv) The Kamerun United Commoners’ Party (KUCP) led by EA Anjeh; and,
- v) Representatives of the NAs as well as the Fons and chiefs.

The political division which characterized Southern Cameroons politics was carried to the Bamenda Conference. The KNDP and the KUCP wanted Southern Cameroons to secede from Nigeria and ultimately reunify with French Cameroon. The KNDP and KUCP wanted the responsibility of the territory’s administration to rest on Her Majesty’s Government through the CO, and a Governor of Southern Cameroons should be appointed.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the KNC and KPP wanted Southern Cameroons to be accorded full “Regional Status” within the Federation of Nigeria for reasons of national security, financial and technical assistance.⁸⁰

The KNC, the governing party in the “Quasi-Federal Territory” of Southern Cameroons, went to the conference in concealed dispersed ranks. There were those who wanted, according to Tamajong Ndumu, the following:

- i) The Cameroons to lose its identity;
- ii) The identity preserved only as a means of shielding them from stronger forces in a Federal Nigeria; and,

78 Constitutional Position of the Southern Cameroons, CO 554/913, File No. WAF 16/78/02, TNA.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

iii) Reunification.⁸¹

The traditional rulers, it was believed, supported reunification but they spoke out against it and rejected "Regional Status" within Nigeria. But before the conference proper kicked off, the traditional rulers submitted a memorandum in which they requested that Southern Cameroons should be maintained in the Federation of Nigeria and its status as a trust Territory should be protected. In addition, in the memorandum, they requested full Regional Status for the territory; a House of Assembly; and, a House of Chiefs.⁸² The traditional rulers muddled the waters as their position shifted with the wind. Fon Achirimbi II of Bafut addressed the issue of *association* with Nigeria and *reunification* with French Cameroon when, speaking on behalf of the traditional rulers, he rejected both *association* and *reunification* saying:

We rejected Dr. EML Endeley because he wanted to take us to Nigeria. If Mr. Foncha tries to take us to the French Cameroons, we shall also run away from him. To me [Fon Achirimbi II of Bafut] French Cameroon is "Fire" and Nigeria is "Water." Sir, I support secession without reunification.⁸³

The position of Southern Cameroons on the eve of the Bamenda Conference was complicated: the KNC was the governing party and the pro-reunification forces in French Cameroon, including Paul Soppo Priso and the Duala *Ngondo* traditional society, believed that Dr. EML Endeley and the KNC were for reunification and, therefore, they worked more with the KNC than with the KNDP. Soppo Priso and the reunificationists in French Cameroon were very disappointed with the outcome of the Bamenda Conference; an outcome which was supported by the KNC. The 1956 Bamenda Conference called on Southern Cameroons to continue to be associated with Nigeria with full "Regional Status."⁸⁴ This was at a time when Soppo Priso, with the support of pro-reunification forces in French Cameroon, voted against the *Loi-Cadre* in the Assembly of the French Union because it refused "to include a clause showing the Cameroons special status, and providing for a constitutional change" unlike Andre-Marie Mbida and Ahmadou Ahidjo who supported it.⁸⁵

81 Letter from Tamajong Ndumu to Victor E. Mukete of 30th August 1956, reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 210. Tamajong Ndumu was an influential member of the KNDP's Kamerun Society.

82 Chiefs Conference Memorandum for the Southern Cameroons Preliminary Constitutional Conference, 28. 5. 56, Co554/913, File No. WAF 16/78/02, TNA.

83 Kale, *Political Evolution*, 69.

84 Bamenda "Summit" Conference, May 28, 1956-June 1, 1956, Oe/1956/, File Nor. 4572/5.1, NAB.

85 Letter from J.H. Beunde to Victor E. Mukete of 20 July 1956, reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 222.

Pro-reunification forces in French Cameroon, under the political pressure group of *Union Nationale* led by Soppo Priso, realized that Dr. EML Endeley's KNC no longer had *reunification* as its political platform. For instance, feelers from Soppo Priso to Dr. EML Endeley in August 1956 for a visit were ignored. According to Isaac Malafa, "Soppo Priso disclosed that he had invited Dr. Endeley... to visit Duala [Douala] for purpose of consultation, or to arrange for him to come across [to Buea] to discuss a common programme... [but] he had received no reply from Dr. Endeley." Malafa went on to add that Soppo Priso "also proposed to invite leaders of all other political groups on this side of the border [Southern Cameroons] as he considers the matter [of reunification] to be a national, rather than a sectional, one."⁸⁶ Dr. EML Endeley's refusal to take up Soppo Priso's invitation tied very well with the secret KNC/AG "Agreement." British officials believed, and rightly so, that Dr. EML Endeley was not for reunification.

Earlier in March 1956, AGH Gardner-Brown, Chief Secretary of the Federation of Nigeria, had told TB Williamson that, according to Dr. Endeley, "whatever might have been said at political meetings or in petitions no responsible suggestions in the House or elsewhere had ever been made...to leave the Federation of Nigeria."⁸⁷ This was not, however, the inner political feelings of several prominent Southern Cameroons politicians such as JN Foncha, ST Muna, Victor E Mukete and SA George; and, traditional rulers like Fon Galega II and Chief Albert Mukete. Unlike Dr. Endeley and the KNC, the KNDP sent a delegation to Douala in response to the invitation from Soppo Priso. The KNDP delegation met with the leadership of the *Union Nationale* from 23rd August to 1st September 1956.

Soppo Priso and the *Union Nationale* finally withdrew their support from the KNC and supported the KNDP because of:

- i) The reunification platform of the KNDP and its warm reception by the *Union Nationale* in August 1956;
- ii) The KNDP's initial collaboration with the UPC in calling for reunification; and,
- iii) The pro-association policy which the KNC displayed at the May 1956 Bamenda Conference convinced Soppo Priso and the *Union Nationale* to move away from the KNC.

86 Letter from Isaac Malafa to Victor E. Mukete of 17 August 1956, reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 209. In April 1956, Dr. EML Endeley paid a brief visit to Douala at the request of John Buende. During the visit, Dr. EML Endeley intimated that he was against reunification but advocated "Good Neighborhood."

87 Movement for the Unification of the Two Trust Territories of the Cameroons, A.G.H. Gardner-Brown to Williamson, 7 March 1956, CO 554/1055, File No. WAF 33/78/02, TNA.

Chiefs Conference, Bamenda, 1956



Soppo Priso and the *Union Nationale* decided, therefore, to provide financial and material support to the KNDP in order to achieve reunification.

In October 1956, the KNDP sent a confidential appeal letter to the *Union Nationale* explaining that:

The KNDP's greatest difficulty is finance. The KNC and the KPP... draw financial and material help from political parties in Nigeria. *We have dinette [sic] this because we are working truly for [re] unification* and hope that our brothers in Eastern Kamerun will give us the necessary help we need.... We want to assure you that *the KNDP is the biggest party in the Southern Cameroons which is working for [re] unification* [Emphasis added].⁸⁸

This was the situation in Southern Cameroons when voters went for elections in March 1957 into the SCHA as dictated by the Lyttelton Constitution.

March 1957 Elections: KNDP and KPP Attempted Forming a Government

The March 1957 election was contested by the KNC, KPP, KNDP and the UPC. The KNC won six seats; the KNDP won five seats; the KPP won two seats; and the UPC had

⁸⁸ Letter reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 466.

no seat. In a desperate attempt to unseat the KNC, the KNDP and the KPP proposed forming a coalition government in spite of the uncontested opposing positions of both parties regarding the political future of Southern Cameroons.

The KNDP and the KPP requested the Commissioner of the Cameroons to allow them form a coalition government but the Commissioner informed them that in addition to the thirteen elected members, the six Native Authorities were also involved in deciding which political party or parties should be asked to form a government.⁸⁹ After the March 1957 election, out of the six NA representatives, four declared for the KNC (Mokambe from Kumba, T. Lekunze from Mamfe, JE Kum from Wum and W. Nformi from Nkambe); one declared for the KNDP (HD Tankoh from Bamenda); and, one Independent (Manga Williams from Victoria). Mrs. DE Idowu, one of the two Special Members, declared for the KNC. Dr. EML Endeley was, therefore, asked to form a government and he turned to the KPP to form a coalition government. There was no doubt that the KNDP/KPP attempt to form a coalition government would have collapsed because of the uncompromising political ideological differences between the two political parties. The platforms of the two parties were poles apart. It would have been a political miracle if they had succeeded but miracles have never been part of politics. The KNC and KPP shared a common political future for Southern Cameroons although personality clashes between the leaders posed a serious problem.

In May 1957, at the request of Dr. EML Endeley, the Governor-General of Nigeria declared the UPC illegal in Southern Cameroons. He issued the Deportation Orders because he deemed "it to be conducive to the public good to make a Deportation Order" against the UPC.⁹⁰ The UPC had criticized the March 1957 elections and threatened to take the KNC Government to court for rigging the elections. The Endeley government did not take the threat kindly. In addition, the reported links between the UPC and President Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who nationalized British interests because of the Suez Canal Crisis, played into the hands of the British. British officials told the thirteen UPC officials who were deported to go "to your friend, Nasser. He has sequestered all our property in Egypt and we are sure he can use some of that to support you."⁹¹

The reunification option which was initially popular in Southern Cameroons was taken over in the territory by some UPC and KNC members and sympathizers with enormous financial, material and psychological support from French Cameroonians resident in

89 Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, 99.

90 *The Cameroon under the United Kingdom Administration: Report by Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations for the year 1957* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 32.

91 VB/b/1956/1, Union of Population of the Cameroons, File No. 6168, NAB.

the territory. Joseph Innocent Nkamsi took the lead and the One Kamerun (OK) party was created with Ndeh Ntumazah as President given that Nkamsi was not a British-protected person; he was a French Cameroonian resident in Southern Cameroons. But it was pressure from France which actually compelled British colonial authorities to ban the UPC in Southern Cameroons. In 1956, the French Minister of France Overseas, Gaston Defferre, went to London and threatened launching anti-British activities in Southern Cameroons if the British failed to cooperate in the fight against the UPC.

In April 1957, a French commando secretly attacked UPC infrastructures in Bamenda. Later, a Franco-Cameroonian commando also attacked the UPC headquarters in Bamenda killing two UPC sympathizers.⁹² The French pressure finally bore fruits because on 30 May 1957, the Governor-General of Nigeria declared the UPC and its affiliated organisations unlawful societies and deported thirteen UPC members.⁹³ Dr. Felix Roland Moumie aptly attributed the deportation of the 13 UPC militants and the banning of the UPC in Southern Cameroons to the fact that "Britain and France supported each other in suppressing the desires of the people for freedom."⁹⁴ The OK party took over the political platform of the UPC in Southern Cameroons.

London Constitutional Conference 1957

The British colonial authorities allocated eight seats to Southern Cameroons for the London Constitutional Conference and, once more, the conference organizers failed to recognize that as a Trust Territory of the UN, Southern Cameroons required a "special status" and should not be treated as one of the British colonies in Africa. The Southern Cameroons delegation comprised delegates with different political aspirations for the territory; even within the same political party. The KNC was led by Dr. EML Endeley as the leader with Victor E. Mukete as adviser and JT Ndze and Fon Galega II as members. The KNDP was led by John Ngu Foncha with Augustine Ngom Jua as adviser. The KPP delegation was headed by Paul M. Kale with NN Mbile as an adviser.

It is important to understand the political platform of each of the delegates to the conference for a better appreciation of the complexities and difficulties each of the political parties (the KNC, KNDP and the KPP) faced in hammering out a united front for the interest of the people of Southern Cameroons. For the KNC, the party's position was clearly stated at the 1956 Bamenda Conference: continued association of Southern

92 Deltombe, *La guerre du Cameroun*, 95.

93 *The Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration: Report by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations for the year 1957* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1958), 32.

94 VB/b/1956/1, Union of Population of the Cameroons, File No. 6168, NAB

Cameroons with the Federation of Nigeria and Dr. EML Endeley was a committed *associationist*. Victor E. Mukete, however, was a staunch reunificationist who, in the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos, on 26 March 1957 had thundered:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to correct the impression that has been created....that the Southern Cameroons will form part and parcel of an independent Nigeria.... The people of the Southern Cameroons, Sir... we feel we must salvage the French Cameroons from the French Union. That is a sacred duty to which Cameroons nationalists are dedicated and until reunification is achieved the question of political relations of the British Cameroons with other West African Territories is only of academic interest.⁹⁵

Fon Galega II, as a member of the KNC delegation, wanted Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon to achieve independence separately before reunification.

The KNDP, led by Foncha, wanted reunification as was evidenced in the KNDP appeal to the *Union Nationale* in October 1956; and, Foncha's evolutionary stance meant ultimate reunification. Jua, as the KNDP adviser, was against reunification and called for the territory's independence as a separate political entity. The KPP wanted *association* with Nigeria but while its leader, Kale, envisioned separation and independence as a separate political entity, the KPP adviser, Mbile, was a committed *associationist*. In fact, the main objective of the KPP's political platform was "regional autonomy for the Trust territory and secession from Nigeria when the latter became an independent country."⁹⁶ There is no doubt that such divergent political views, even within the same political party, compounded the discussions and decision on the territory's political future. The difficulty of arriving at a consensus was aggravated when the crucial moment to agree on the way forward for the population of Southern Cameroons emerged on the political arena from 1959 to 1961.

The "warning" from the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, to the Southern Cameroons delegation at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference that "many of the best friends of the Cameroons do not foresee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than continued association"⁹⁷ with Nigeria sealed the fate of the delegation. The term "Quasi-Federal Territory" was abolished

95 "Speech Delivered by the Honourable Victor Mukete in the House of representatives on the 26th March, 1957, As Recorded in the Official Report," in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 270.

96 Bongfen Chem-Langhèè, "The Kamerun Plebiscites 1959-1961: Perceptions and Strategies" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976), 58.

97 SCIS, B, "An Address by the chairman of the 'Summit Conference' Sir Sidney Phillipson, at Mamfe on Monday August 10th 1959," *Press Release, No. 422, August 11, 1959, 2, NAB.*

and the territory was implicitly granted a regional status. The Governor-General was responsible for matters within the competence of the Southern Cameroons Government; he was called High Commissioner for Southern Cameroons; and, the Commissioner of Southern Cameroons would be responsible to the High Commissioner. Southern Cameroons was not granted full autonomy and its request for its own Governor was rejected. In promoting the territory's association with Nigeria, the British colonial authorities sided with the KNC-KPP alliance despite the lack of unanimity amongst the KNC delegates. But, what mattered to the British was that Southern Cameroons should achieve independence in association with Nigeria. The conference ended and the delegates returned home to meet again in September 1958.

Dr. EML Endeley as Premier

The closeness of the political ideologies of the KNC and the KPP which was demonstrated at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference facilitated the forging of an alliance between the two political parties. Although the political platforms of both parties were similar, the personality differences and clashes between the leaders meant that they had to walk a tight rope. A successful KNC-KPP alliance was a step towards the formation of a ministerial system of government with Dr. EML Endeley as the Premier. Paul M. Kale of the KPP confirmed his personality clash with Dr. EML Endeley as follows: "Dr. Endeley and I have never seen eye-to-eye in politics over the years."⁹⁸ Mbile, in a biting April 1955 letter, castigated Dr. EML Endeley saying:

We have never known you [Endeley] to be worth two pence when it comes to facing consequences squarely....Or, if you are like the insolent weakling who insults the bigger boy because the master is about, do you realize you are placing too much in your hopes on the continued existence of the shield from behind which you insult those whom you should otherwise not dare to address.⁹⁹

Despite these differences and the rejection of a KNC-KPP alliance within some KNC and KPP circles, Endeley, Kale and Mbile were persuaded to bury the hatchet because "the question of alliance--initiative which came from the KNC--was a necessity in view of the danger to the territory of the tribal politics being propagated by the KNDP."¹⁰⁰ On 15 May 1958, despite opposition from the KNDP, Sir Ralph Grey,¹⁰¹ Acting Governor-

⁹⁸ Kale, *Political Evolution*, "Preface."

⁹⁹ Kamerun Peoples Party General Correspondence, Vb/b/1959/1, File No. P. 310/S.2, NAB.

¹⁰⁰ *Daily Times*, 20 December 1957.

¹⁰¹ Ralph Francis A. Grey (born in April 1910 and died in October 1999) joined the Colonial Admin-

General of Nigeria and also Acting Commissioner of Southern Cameroons, appointed Dr. EML Endeley Premier of Southern Cameroons. On 29 May 1958, Dr. Endeley, in a major policy statement, abandoned reunification and clearly stated that "with the Northern Cameroons absorbed in Nigeria and French Cameroons assimilated into the French Union, it now seems unlikely that the Cameroons would ever return to the status it was before 1914."¹⁰² In 1958, Dr. EML Endeley unreservedly took off *reunification* from the KNC platform when he stated "the KNC had modified its policy on [re]unification [and] it is a matter no longer on our priority lists."¹⁰³

In September 1958, Southern Cameroons delegates returned to London for the Resumed London Constitutional Conference to complete the unfinished business of the 1957 London Constitutional Conference. Dr. EML Endeley replaced Fon Galega II and Victor E. Mukete on the KNC delegation: Fon John Yai of Bum replaced Fon Galega II and PA Ayuk replaced Victor E. Mukete. These replacements were not surprising because Fon Galega II and Victor E. Mukete opposed Dr. EML Endeley's *associationist* position and supported *reunification*. In the new KNC delegation, Fon Yai was adviser and PA Ayuk was a member. The Resumed London Constitutional Conference granted Southern Cameroons full "Regional Status" similar to the other Regions of Nigeria. In Southern Cameroons, the Governor-General was known as the High Commissioner; the authority that executed the functions of the Lieutenant-Governor was called the Commissioner in Southern Cameroons. The membership of the SCHA was increased from 13 members to 26 based on single member constituencies. The details of the Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs agreed on in 1957 were worked out and women were given the franchise for the first time in Southern Cameroons.

In November 1958, the Fourth and last UN Visiting Mission to Southern Cameroons met with political parties, political pressure groups and traditional rulers in order to ascertain the political future of the territory. The KNC-KPP alliance demanded a fully self-governing region for Southern Cameroons in association with the Federation of Nigeria; the KNDP demanded secession from Nigeria and ultimate reunification with French Cameroon; the OK requested that the UN should unilaterally reunify

istrative service in 1936 and in 1937 he was administrative service cadet at Lagos, Nigeria. He was Secretary to the Governor-General in Nigeria and General Council Ministers in 1954; he was Chief Secretary of the Federation of Nigeria in 1955 and Deputy Governor-General of Nigeria from 1957 to 1959. He was Governor of British Guiana (Guyana) from 1959 to 1964; Governor of the Bahamas from 1964 to 1968; Governor of Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1973 and member of the House of Lords (Lord Temporal) from 1968 until his death in 1999.

102 EML Endeley, *A Statement of Policy Made by the Premier of Southern Cameroons* (Lagos: federal Information Service, 1958), 8.

103 Eyongetah and Brain, *History of the Cameroon*, 153.

British and French Cameroons; and, the traditional rulers demanded secession from Nigeria and they were not prepared to “achieve independence within the Federation of Nigeria.”¹⁰⁴ With these conflicting demands, Southern Cameroons electorate went to the polls for the 24 January 1959 general elections.

January 1959 General Elections

The January 1959 general elections were dominated by the various positions which the political parties adopted for the political future of the territory. The KNC-KPP called for the granting of full regional status to Southern Cameroons in association with Nigeria while the KNDP called for the territory’s secession from Nigeria and its ultimate reunification with French Cameroons. There were, of course, other determining side issues such as “personality clashes; ethnicism [tribalism]; the influence of powerful chiefs and fons; the influence of UPC refugees in the Southern Cameroons; and, the Anlou Revolt in Kom.”¹⁰⁵

In addition to these “side issues,” there was the influence of French Cameroonians (“strangers”) resident in Southern Cameroons who, literally speaking, and without exception, backed the KNDP. In order to advance its political agenda, Foncha and the KNDP created a branch of the KNDP in French Cameroon and allied with the Committee for the Reunification of the Cameroons (COREC), a French Cameroon non-political organisation based in Douala. The January 1959 general elections extended the franchise to women for the first time.¹⁰⁶ At the end of the elections, Dr. EML Endeley and the KNC-KPP alliance were defeated by a score of 75,425 votes for the KNDP and 51,425 votes for the KNC-KPP alliance. The KNDP won 14 seats while the KNC-KPP alliance had 12 seats. Several factors accounted for the defeat of the KNC-KPP alliance and they included: the decline of the popularity of the KNC as it abandoned the reunification option; Dr. EML Endeley’s shabby treatment of SA George; the lie on the “Handbag story” against Dr. EML Endeley; the fielding of both KNC and KPP candidates in the same constituency which led the alliance to split the vote and the KNDP candidate won; and, the Anlou revolt in Kom country, amongst others.¹⁰⁷

104 Chem-Langhëë, *Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities*,” 156-157.

105 Etim Elijah, “E.M.L. Endeley and the Southern Cameroons Quest for Independence 1940-1961: A Historical Analysis” (M.A. Thesis, University of Buea, 2012), 139.

106 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 116. In the Victoria South East Constituency, the KNC/KPP Alliance fielded Nambile and Dipoko who split the votes and Mbua Monono of the KNDP won; in Mamfe South, the KNC/KPP Alliance also fielded two candidates who split the votes and Dickson Mbi Frambo of the KNDP won.

107 For more information, see Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present*, 186-188.

According to John Mondji Boja, the KNDP won the 1959 general elections partly because it lied to the electorate. In rejecting lies to have political victories, Dr. EML Endeley said: "I would rather lose my seat telling the truth... than retain that seat when I know I am living on the top of a deceived mob."¹⁰⁸ Hon. JC Kangolo, on the other hand, explained the KNDP victory on the grounds that "The average man [in Southern Cameroons] did not understand the issues that divided the political parties."¹⁰⁹ This view was well articulated by Kenneth E. Berrill who noted that the illiteracy rate in Southern Cameroons in the 1950s was about 90 percent.¹¹⁰ Contrary to Ndi's assertion in *Southern West Cameroon* that the KNC-KPP alliance "refused to concede defeat with the strong backing of the British Government arguing that the margin of victory, 14-12 was too narrow and indecisive,"¹¹¹ Dr. EML Endeley graciously accepted defeat "with honour" and maintained his position as leader of the opposition "with honour and dignity."¹¹²

Before the elections, Dr. Endeley told CK Barth¹¹³ that: "If the opposition KNDP and Hon. Foncha won the elections... we should obey and carry out the instructions of Foncha's government...we should stay calm and work with the new government as Cameroonians not as warriors..."¹¹⁴ Ndi also explains in his publication, *Southern West Cameroon*, that "Dr. EML Endeley... accompanied by his spouse, calmly and even with a measure of joviality, embraced and shook hands with his victorious opponent, Mr. John Ngu Foncha..."¹¹⁵ But the defeat of the KNC/KPP Alliance was bitter to swallow especially given the shabby treatment which Dr. EML Endeley received at the Tiko Airport when he, as the out-going Premier, saw off Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, who was on an official visit to Southern Cameroons shortly after the general elections. According to an eye witness account, after Dr. Nkrumah flew off, "KNDP

108 House of Assembly Debates, Official Report, 11-12 February 1959 (Buea: government Press, 1959), 28.

109 Elijah, "E.M.L. Endeley and the Southern Cameroons," 166.

110 Kenneth E. Berrill, *The Economy of Southern Cameroons Under United Kingdom Trusteeship* (Cambridge: n.p., 1960), 2.

111 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 135.

112 *House of Assembly Debates, official Reports*, 5.

113 Chia Kiyan Barth (born in 1924 and died in 2019) was initially a vendor for the newspapers owned by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo from 1946 to 1947. He was a staunch KNC stalwart who had the unfortunate responsibility of explaining the "contour farming" method to the Kom women which led to the Anlou uprising of 1958. Barth was, at one time, the chairman of the Wum Council.

114 Cited in Elijah, "E.M.L. Endeley and the Southern Cameroons," 166.

115 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 78

thugs jumped into CM 7 [the official PM's car] and drove off, leaving Dr. EML Endeley stranded at the Tiko airport."¹¹⁶

The KNDP victory did not give the party the mandate to decide the political future of the territory as Foncha became the Premier on 30 January 1959. But, Foncha and the KNDP had the immense political responsibility of working with the other political parties in the territory, the UN and the other stakeholders in-and-out of the territory to chart the way forward for the territory's political future. This was especially so because Premier Ahidjo and Premier Foncha regarded the January 1959 KNDP victory as a victory for *reunification*. As a matter of fact, on 2 February 1959, Ahidjo sent a congratulatory message to Foncha and on 12 February 1959, Foncha, in the SCHA, declared: "I am proud to say that the way is open for me to go to Yaounde to discuss the terms for the future of the Cameroons. Mr. Mbinda [Mbida] who was a French integrationist is off from Yaounde ... the KNC is off from this side of the House and the whole Cameroons territory is pulling together."¹¹⁷

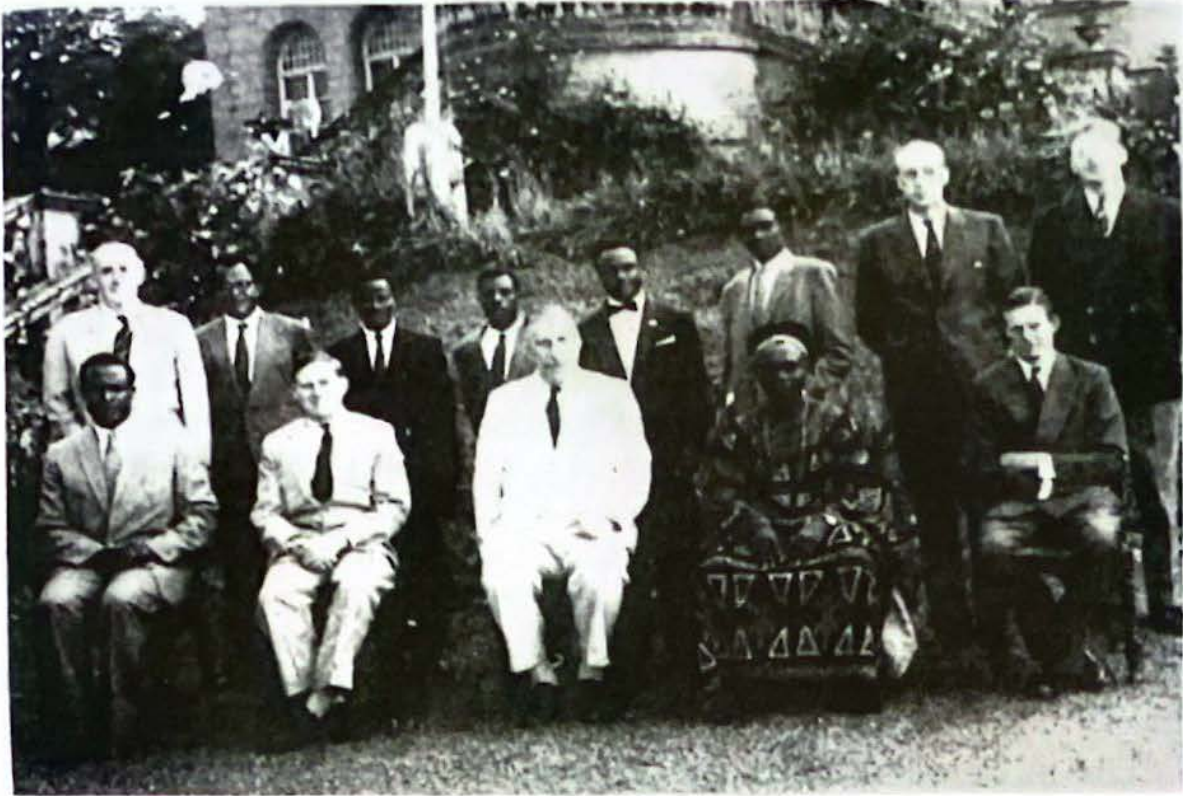
Although the British and French, as brilliantly analyzed by Torrent, agreed that "a general election, [and] not referendum on the territory's future, and local issues had weighed far more heavily in the political balance," the French, nonetheless, felt that "Foncha's victory was considered across the border [in French Cameroon] as a vote for reunification."¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, the first political casualty of the defeat of the KNC-KPP alliance was the split within the KPP. PM Kale left the KPP and created the Kamerun United Party (KUP) with a clear-cut platform for the territory's secession from Nigeria and its attainment of independence as a separate political entity. This was the political atmosphere in Southern Cameroons as the territory entered the year 1959 in quest for its independence either in association with Nigeria; by reunifying with French Cameroon; or, separate independence as a "Third Option."

116 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 119.

117 "Foncha J.N.: Debates on Election Results, 12 February 1959", *Debates in the House of Assembly, Official Report*, 11-12 February 1959, 39.

118 Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 23.

Southern Cameroon Executive Council 1959



Sitting from Left to Right: Solomon T. Muna, John O. Field, Sir James Robertson, Premier John N. Foncha and Malcolm Milne

Conclusion

The inability of Southern Cameroons politicians to agree on either independence of the territory in association with Nigeria, reunification with French Cameroon or independence as a separate political entity divided the political class into three groups. The lack of a consensus was aided by internal and external interests. However, the crisis in the Nigerian polity also led to constitutional developments in Southern Cameroons and the territory acquired a Quasi-Federal Status instead of a full Regional Status in 1954. The inter-play of party-politics galvanized the population and sharpened the failure of Southern Cameroons politicians in arriving at a political consensus despite several constitutional conferences. The British subtle covert pressure in favour of the territory's independence in association with Nigeria did not help the situation. The KNDP victory in the January 1959 general elections did not advance the political discourse and the UN became more and more involved in the decision on the political future of the population as examined in the chapter on the "Third Option."

CHAPTER TWO

SEARCH FOR A “THIRD OPTION”

Introduction

The results of the 1959 general elections did not give the KNDP the mandate to decide the political future of the territory. The Foncha government which emerged from the general elections had to grapple with the burning questions of the independence of Southern Cameroons: reunification with French Cameroon; association with Nigeria; and, independence as a separate political entity. In the process, after Southern Cameroons politicians held stubbornly to their respective positions and only agreed on a plebiscite but not on the plebiscite questions, Premier Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley accepted to request a “Third Option.” The “Third Option” was independence as a separate political entity.

Early Views of Reunification in Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon

The reunification caravan was driven by politicians and elites from both Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon who met frequently and exchanged ideas on reunification. These exchanges in the early and mid-1950s echoed the ethnic links between the coastal peoples especially between the Bakweri, Bafaw, Bakossi, Balong and the Duala. The Bamileke, Bassa/Bakoko and the Beti who resided in Southern Cameroons especially in the divisions of Kumba, Victoria and Bamenda also championed reunification. It was not, however, a smooth ride for pro-reunificationists in French Cameroon, just as it was not in Southern Cameroons. In the Beti country, for example, and more especially among the Eton and Ewondo, the most influential indigenous politician was André-Marie Mbida, President of the *Parti des Démocrates Camerounaise* (PDC), and he was against reunification.

Mbida and the PDC believed that the reunification of British and French Cameroons was not important to the political evolution of French Cameroon.¹ He was convinced that reunification was impossible. In British Northern Cameroons, the British were very successful in their pro-Nigeria policy and British Northern Cameroonians favoured political integration with the Northern Region of Nigeria and, *ipso facto*, with the Federation of Nigeria. But, the position of British Northern Cameroonians was not

1 Daniel Abwa, *André-Marie Mbida, Premier Premier Ministre Camerounais (1917-1980)* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1993), 165.

initially clear-cut because in the November 1959 elections, the electorate of Northern Cameroons voted to decide the future of the territory “at a later” date as opposed to being “part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation of Nigeria becomes independent” by a vote of 70,546 to 42,788.²

In Southern Cameroons, the political stage was dominated by voices which called for *reunification* with French Cameroon (the KNDP, the UPC, some traditional rulers and later the OK party); *association* with Nigeria (the KNC and the KPP); and, *secession and an independent* Southern Cameroons (the KUP, the Cameroons Commoners Congress and the Cameroons Indigenes Party). As Churchill Monono aptly describes it:

The domestic environment in Cameroon ... shows that reunification was a major political current [in the late 1950s] in both ... [French Cameroon] and the Southern Cameroons. It also shows that there were dissenting voices across the board with certain political forces opting to either unite with Nigeria or to become an independent nation.³

Southern Cameroons politicians were, unfortunately, unable to arrive at a consensus and they turned to the UN for a solution. Christopher Eastwood of the CO vividly captured the dilemma Southern Cameroons politicians found themselves in the following warning:

It would be a tragedy if through [the Southern Cameroons leaders'] failure to agree among themselves or state forthrightly what their wishes and demands are, the United Nations were to force on the people of the Southern Cameroons a choice which only a tiny minority of the people want.⁴

That was, unfortunately, what later happened down the road in October 1959.

Drafting the Plebiscite Questions

In 1959, the political leaders of Southern Cameroons were agreeing to disagree, so to speak, on what the indigenous population of the territory wanted regarding their political future. The politicians, unable to arrive at a consensus, agreed that the major political parties should send their representatives to the UN in New York to present their respective positions. The representatives were: Premier John Ngu Foncha for the

2 Claude E. Welch, *Dream of Unity: Pan Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 220.

3 Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, *Delicate Negotiations for Reunification: A Tribute to Cameroon's Budding Diplomacy, 1959-1963* (Buea: CEREDDA, 2018), 25.

4 C. Eastwood to Sir James Robertson, Lagos-draft, June 1959, CO554/175b, TNA.

KNDP; Dr. EML Endeley for the KNC and Neri N. Mbile for the KPP. In January 1959 France, meanwhile, tabled a resolution at the UN which called for the granting of independence to French Cameroon. Although the resolution which was also supported by Britain was adopted, the Soviet Union voted against it because "The future Cameroon, under the French and British administrations should be examined together and the *reunification of the territory realized at the same time as its independence* [Emphasis added]."⁵ The position of the Soviet Union was the most comprehensive and politically savvy for the future stability and development of the two Cameroons.

But, the politics and atmosphere after World War II which were influenced by the Cold War made it impossible for an in-depth discussion and consideration of the Soviet position. Before the Southern Cameroons delegation left for New York, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the KNDP met from 2-3 February 1959 and rejected the notion of a plebiscite. The KNDP wanted "outright secession from Nigeria by October 1959 to enable" the territory join "[French Cameroon] before their independence on 1 January 1960."⁶ The KNDP position was later eloquently stated by ST Muna in a motion in the SCHA in February 1959. In the motion, Muna prayed:

Her Majesty's Government to take immediate steps to fulfill the wishes of the people of the Southern Cameroons as indicated by the results of the last [January 1959] general elections in which the KNDP, the secessionist Party, polled more than half of the total number of votes ... strongly advocates secession of the Southern Cameroons from ... Nigeria before she attains independence in 1960, and to continue under a modified form of the Trusteeship Agreement *for some time during which the possibilities of reunification with any section of the British and French sectors can be explored* [Emphasis added].⁷

The motion was adopted by a vote of 14 to 12 strictly on the KNDP vs. KNC-KPP alliance party line. The KNDP position of "secession of the Southern Cameroons... for some time during which the possibilities of reunification... can be explored" became the party's rallying cry throughout 1959 until the September-October 1959 UN session. But the KNC/KPP alliance knew that the ultimate goal of the KNDP was reunification with French Cameroon as stated in the confidential KNDP letter to the *Union Nationale* dated 26 October 1956.

5 Agence France Presse (AFP) Bulletin, 18 Janvier 1959, VI, cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 84.

6 AFP Bulletin, "La Situation au Cameroun du sud," 17 février 1959, VI.

7 SCIS, B, "House of Assembly Meeting: Motion for Secession." Press Release No. 279, 13th February 1959.

The KNDP stance on immediate reunification before Southern Cameroons achieved independence was welcomed by Ahidjo who insisted that French Cameroon should achieve independence before negotiating reunification with Southern Cameroons which would still be a Trust territory. The position of Ahidjo in favour of immediate reunification was a successful sinister political ploy to pull the rug under the UPC. The position of Ahidjo was contrary to that of the Soviet Union as mentioned above. The Ahidjo position was meant to give an independent French Cameroon an enormous political advantage over Southern Cameroons during negotiations given that the latter would still be a trust territory of the UN. In February 1959, the Thirteenth Session of the UN took up the Southern Cameroons issue. During the debates, Foncha called for:

- i) The separation of Southern Cameroons from the Federation of Nigeria; and,
- ii) The territory's ultimate reunification with French Cameroon by mutual discussions and agreement.

On the question of voters' qualification, Foncha emphasized that Nigerians and French Cameroonians residing in the territory should not be given the franchise. According to him, the plebiscite concerned the indigenes of the territory whether they wanted *reunification* with French Cameroon or *association* with Nigeria. Endeley, on the other hand, wanted that Nigerians and French Cameroonians residing in Southern Cameroons should be allowed to vote. Later, on 28 February 1959, Foncha explained his "priority to reunification" in a message to French Cameroonians in French Cameroon in *La Presse du Cameroun*.⁸ It should be underscored that neither Foncha nor Dr. EML Endeley talked of wanting Southern Cameroons to achieve independence as a separate political entity during the Thirteenth Session of the UN in February 1959.

There is no doubt that although French Cameroonians in Southern Cameroons staunchly financed and supported the KNDP, the party also drew huge financial and material support from pro-reunificationist groups in French Cameroon. They were more Nigerians in Southern Cameroons than French Cameroonians and Foncha and the KNDP knew that the vast Nigerian population, compared to the French Cameroonian population, and the easy movement of Nigerians to Southern Cameroons would tilt the vote in favour of the KNC-KPP position. At the UN, therefore, Foncha and Endeley differed on the alternative questions to be presented to the electorate and also on the eligibility of the voters. The Southern Cameroons delegates were, consequently, advised to return to Southern Cameroons and work out a compromise. Before the delegates

8 *AFP Bulletin*, 28 féviers 1959, "Un Message du M. John Ngu Foncha au peuple du Cameroun sous tutelle française adressée en exclusivité à La Presse du Cameroun.»

returned home from the UN, Ahidjo made a statement with far-reaching consequences on the relationship between a reunified French Cameroon and Southern Cameroons.

On 25 February 1959, in response to a question on the terms of an eventual *reunification* between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon, Ahidjo stated:

I would not like the firmness and clarity of our stand [on reunification] to be interpreted as a desire for integration on any part We do not wish to bring the weight of our population to bear on our British brothers. *We are not annexationists*. In other words, if *our brothers of the British zone wish to unite with an independent [French] Cameroon*, we are ready to discuss it on a footing of equality [Emphasis added].⁹

Ahidjo's February 1959 response surely did not raise eyebrows given the political atmosphere at the time. Both Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon were of equal international status: both were UN trust territories. In addition, as the Soviet Union delegation opined, some quarters wanted the independence of British and French Cameroons to be examined simultaneously; and some discussions were geared towards Southern Cameroons achieving independence on the same day as French Cameroon. On the Nigerian front, Nigerian leaders rejected Foncha's position of independence within the Commonwealth as he had intimated to Dr. EML Endeley and some British officials on 17 February 1959. Nigerian leaders wanted the political situation of Southern Cameroons to be clarified before the achievement of independence by Nigeria.¹⁰

It was, therefore, conceivable that Southern Cameroons could achieve independence on 1 January 1960 and the plebiscite on the option of either *reunification* or *association* would have been organized after Nigeria's independence on 1 October 1960. Although these scenarios did not materialize, it is important that these political discussions should be borne in mind when analyzing Ahidjo's 25 February 1959 statement.¹¹ Meanwhile, in accordance with UN Resolution 1350 (XIII) of 13 March 1959, Southern Cameroonians were called upon to seek a consensus on the plebiscite questions to be put to the electorate and the eligibility of the voters. UN Resolution 1350 (XIII) also stipulated that the plebiscite should be held during the dry season; that is, between December 1959 and April 1960.

9 Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 95.

10 Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation Building*, 24.

11 Ahidjo's "talk" of discussion "on a footing of equality" changed after 1st January 1960 when French Cameroon became an independent sovereign nation while Southern Cameroons was still a UN Trust Territory administered by the UK. Ahidjo's "talk" of equality continued right into 1960 and Southern Cameroons leaders (KNDP), unfortunately bought into it.

In May 1959, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies opened the door to John Ngu Foncha and his close colleagues (Muna and Jua) for a clear and unambiguous statement on the political future of the Southern Cameroons during a meeting in Ikeja, Lagos. At the meeting, Lennox-Boyd, at Jua's prodding, agreed that the UK would support the rejection of *reunification* as one of the plebiscite questions if it was firmly rejected by the KNDP Government. According to Lennox-Boyd, "Her Majesty's Government will decline to agree to the question being posed at the UN."¹² Foncha and the KNDP, unfortunately, did not grasp the opportunity. In July 1959, Sir James Robertson¹³ visited Southern Cameroons in an attempt to persuade the political leaders to reach a political consensus but the expected result was not achieved; the Southern Cameroons leaders met again in Mamfe in August 1959 in an attempt, once more, to break the deadlock.

First Annual Convention of NUKS, Kumba, July 1959

Before the meeting in Mamfe, Premier Foncha used the First Annual Convention of the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS), Nigeria, of 30 July 1959 to explicitly explain what he and the KNDP meant by "separation" from the Federation of Nigeria. Speaking at the NUKS Convention in Kumba, Foncha told the delegates that there were only two political policies for the future of Southern Cameroons. He explained the two political policies as follows:

To remain part and parcel of the Federation of Nigeria forever ... [which was the first and] the policy of separation from the said Federation because the people want freedom and reunification [which was the second]. The KNC/KPP Alliance holds the first, while the KNDP stands by the second.... *We have therefore set out to fight for separation without which the ultimate objective [of reunification] will never be achieved [Emphasis added].*¹⁴

Foncha could not have better stated the KNDP goal for the territory and this should be borne in mind in analyzing the subsequent debates and arguments of Foncha and the KNDP during the crucial meetings on the territory's future in 1959/1960. It is also worthy of note that Foncha did not include the "policy" of the territory's separation from Nigeria and its attainment of independence as a separate political entity as demanded by the KUP.

12 Administration of the Cameroons, CO 554/1744, File No. WAF 33/78/01, TNA.

13 James Wilson Robertson (born in October 1899 and died in 1983) was the last colonial British Governor general in Nigeria, 1955-1960. He was knighted in 1965.

14 SCIS, B, "Full Text of an Address by the Premier of the Southern Cameroons the Hon. J.N. Foncha At the Opening of the First Annual Conference of the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) at Kumba on July 30, 1959," Press Release No. 410, 31st July 1959.

Mamfe Plebiscite Conference August 1959

The Mamfe Plebiscite Conference ran from 10-11 August 1959. It was attended by the KNDP, KNC, KPP, KUP, OK, traditional rulers, Native Authorities and political pressure groups such as the Kamerun Society and NUKS. In his opening address, the Acting Commissioner for Southern Cameroons, Malcolm Milne, reminded the delegates of the advice the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lennox-Boyd, gave Southern Cameroons delegates at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference that “many of the best friends of the Cameroons do not foresee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than continued association with Nigeria.”¹⁵

As Chairperson of the Conference, Sydney Phillipson informed the delegates that they were to address two questions:

- i) What questions should be put to the voters; and ,
- ii) Who should vote in the plebiscite?¹⁶

The debate on “what questions should be put to the voters” revolved around the following:

- i) Status of a self-governing Region within an independent Federation of Nigeria;
- ii) Separation from Nigeria with a period under Trusteeship; and,
- iii) Separation from Nigeria with the opening of early negotiations with French Cameroon for reunification on acceptable terms.¹⁷

In the course of the debates, the KNDP underscored that when it talked of *secession*, it did not mean secession and independence as a separate political entity. The KNDP wanted *secession* and a period of continued UK trusteeship during which it would decide on either *reunification* or *association*. In reality, the concept of *reunification* was understood to mean *secession* and *ultimate reunification*. The KNDP, however, did not want Southern Cameroonians to know that *reunification* was the party’s final goal. As Mbile aptly stated:

15 SCIS, B, “Full Text of an Address by the Acting Commissioner of the Cameroons, Mr. M.H. Milne, At Mamfe on Monday, August 10th 1959,” *Press Release No. 421*, 11th August 1959, NAB.

16 SCIS, B, “Full Text of an Address by the Chairman of the Summit Conference, Sir Sidney Phillipson, at Mamfe on Monday August 10th 1959,” *Press Release No. 422*, 11th August 1959, NAB.

17 *Ibid.*, see also Kale, *Political Evolution*, 69.

The hard fact was that [re] unification especially at the time of the UPC unrest was so unpalatable that its advocates dared not tell the average Southern Cameroonians that we were heading to full blast for it as a choice. It is on this dread for [re]unification that the pro-Nigerian politicians partly banked their success in the plebiscite.¹⁸

The KNDP was aware, in the 1950s, that reunification was not very popular especially after May 1955.

According to Foncha, reunification, which he regarded as a “domestic affair,” should not be imposed from outside. The KNC-KPP proposed *reunification* or *association*. The KUP advocated secession and independence as a separate political entity; the OK led by Ntumazah proposed that the question should simply be: “Do you wish to reunify with an independent French Cameroon?” The Kamerun Society was for *reunification* but its delegate, Nicholas A. Ngwa, abandoned the Society’s position and argued that the plebiscite questions should be *association* or *secession*. The National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) called for “secession and ultimate reunification” and rejected separate independence. NUKS argued that the territory would not be a stable political entity should it attain independence as a separate state. The traditional rulers led by Fon Achirimbi II of Bafut said that they wanted “neither fire nor water;”¹⁹ meaning neither *association* nor *reunification*.

Although the KUP stood for *secession* and independence, which was what most of the traditional rulers wanted at one time, the latter did not support the KUP in driving home the message. As a matter of fact, it is interesting to note that the three political parties in the territory which supported *secession* and separate independence were forest-based parties: the KUP of PM Kale; the Cameroons Indigens Party (CIP) of Chief Manga Williams;²⁰ and, the Cameroons Commoners Congress (CCC) of Chief

18 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 128-129.

19 Kale, *Political Evolution*, 69.

20 John Manga Williams (born in 1877 and died in 1959) was the Chief of Victoria and the grandson of King William (Bile) of Bimbia. He was appointed District Head of Victoria by the Germans in 1908. In 1946, he received the Order of the British Empire (OBE). He was appointed the Southern Cameroons representative to the Legislative Council of Nigeria in 1942. In 1947, based on the Richards Constitution, he and Fon Galega II of Bali represented Southern Cameroons in the Eastern regional House of Assembly. He was a member of the SCHA as a Native Authority member. He created a political party, the Cameroons Indigens Party (CIP), which advocated Southern Cameroons independence as a separate entity. He was a member of the Southern Cameroons Chief Conference and a member of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly as a Native Authority.

Stephen E Nyenti. Without the support of the Bamenda Grassfield population, none of these parties made a dent on the territory's political stage.

The position of the traditional rulers on *secession and independence* was very ambiguous. During the 1956 Bamenda Conference, the traditional rulers rejected *association* and *reunification*; at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference, Fon Galega II of Bali wired Fon Achirimbi II of Bafut to galvanize the traditional rulers to support *reunification*; and, in August 1959 the traditional rulers rejected *reunification* and supported *secession and independence*. Some of the prominent chiefs, however, such as Chief Manga Williams of Victoria were against *reunification*. Chief Manga Williams created the CIP to campaign for *secession* and independence as a separate political entity; so did Chief Stephen E Nyenti with his CCC. It was, therefore, an over generalization to imply that all traditional rulers were either for *reunification* or *secession and separate independence* at any given moment.

On the subject of the eligibility of voters, Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley repeated their respective positions of February 1959 at the UN; NUKS, on its part, proposed that Southern Cameroonians who were at least 18 years old should be allowed to vote and the election should be on the basis of universal suffrage. The OK argued that only Cameroonians should be eligible. The delegates at the Mamfe Plebiscite Conference failed to agree on the two questions which Sydney Phillipson had centered the conference on. The "two questions" were, therefore, transferred to the SCHA which debated on them on 9 September 1959. The debates in the SCHA did not resolve the "problem" as both the KNDP and the KNC-KPP alliance stuck to their respective positions with the KNDP adding that *reunification* was "a domestic affair" which should not be imposed from outside.

But FN Ajebe-Sone of the KNC bluntly pointed out that the KNDP was trying to conceal the issue of *reunification* from the electorate. He suggested that if the KNDP dropped the phrase *ultimate reunification* from its political platform, the KNC-KPP alliance would accept *secession*,²¹ which meant *secession* and independence as a separate political entity. This political bait was not taken up by the KNDP in spite of Jua's suggestion that the issue should be "association with Nigeria or not." Jua argued that he could not understand why countries like Gambia could be considered for independence as a separate political entity but not Southern Cameroons.²² The political impasse in the SCHA led some Southern Cameroons politicians to contemplate on the way forward and the option of an independent separate Southern Cameroons state was floated by

21 SCIS, B, "House of Assembly Debates: Motion on Plebiscite Questions and Qualifications, 9th September 1959," *Press Release No. 468*, NAB.

22 Ibid.

politicians led by PM Kale. On this note, and without any consensus on UN Resolution 1350 (XIII) of March 1959, Southern Cameroons politicians returned to the UN for the General Assembly's 82-nation Trusteeship Council Session of September –October 1959.

Reality of the Lurking Option: Secession and Separate Independence

Most historians of Cameroon history and more especially on “Southern Cameroons search for independence” have not yet recognized or explained that none of the major political parties and/or political pressure groups publicly and forcefully campaigned for the territory's independence as a separate political entity before January 1959. This subject took an added and significant interest with the outbreak of the Anglophone Crisis in October/November 2016. It was consistently and generally argued that *secession/separation* was the most popular political demand in the territory's quest for its political future.²³

The KNC and the KPP which were formed in 1953 did not, at any time before September/October 1959, call for the territory's separation from Nigeria and its attainment of independence as a separate political entity. In 1954, the KNC set up a committee to examine the issue of secession and reunification of the territory with French Cameroon and it reported in favour of “secession and reunification.”²⁴ PM Kale's wing in the KPP which advocated *secession and independence* was drowned by the KNC-KPP alliance and associationist groups. The KNDP, since its creation in 1955, never clearly and overtly advocated the secession and independence for the territory as a separate entity. Even some senior KNDP officials who “displayed” support for the territory's independence as a separate political entity did not find it politically wise to support the KUP when it was created in February 1959 with the specific agenda of “separate independence.” The OK was for the territory's immediate independence and immediate reunification

23 Foncha's support for *secession/separation* did not signify support for the territory's *secession* and independence as a separate political entity which was what the KUP wanted. The traditional rulers, at one moment, wanted *secession* and independence as a separate political entity. According to Torrent, Foncha wanted “secession from Nigeria and an interval for negotiation with French Cameroon” and “not *immediate reunification*,” see, Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation Building*, 23. It should be understood that Foncha's *secession* was not for the territory's independence as a separate political entity. In a letter dated 10 May 1959, Isaac N. Malafa, a staunch reunificationist and a member of the Kamerun Society, wrote to the Kamerun Students' Strategic Committee in Lagos explaining that although *reunification* was the goal of the KNDP, for political expediency and realpolitik, the KNDP was not overtly promoting *immediate reunification*. The letter is reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 321-326.

24 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 347.

between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon; the OK was never for a separate independence. The rejection of “secession and independence as a separate political entity” was also the position of the Kamerun Society; the Association of Cameroon Students in Great Britain and Ireland; and, the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS).

On the other side of the coin, the KUP and the traditional rulers requested the secession of the territory and its independence as a separate entity. The KUP was the only political party in the territory which had “secession and independence of Southern Cameroons” as its main political goal and campaigned on the platform. Unfortunately, the popularity of the KUP was limited to its leader, Kale, whose political stature was unquestionable and well respected but he and his party’s platform failed to capture an appreciable proportion of the population of Southern Cameroons. The political influence of Kale and the KUP was very limited unlike the KNC, KPP and KNDP partly because the KUP was not represented in the SCHA. Unfortunately for the KUP, the traditional rulers were not firmly committed to the “secession and independence” of Southern Cameroons for they vacillated from “wanting neither water nor fire” to *reunification*.

In reality, after the failed November 1960 London Conference, the KUP fizzled out of the territory’s political landscape as its leader, Kale, joined the KNDP and eventually became the Speaker of the West Cameroon House of Assembly.²⁵ The traditional rulers dilly-dallied from *secession* and separate independence for the territory in 1956 to *reunification* in 1957 and back to *secession* and separate independence in April 1958 and August 1959. They never threw their weight and influence behind the KUP; they instead, broadly speaking, supported the KNDP. It was known and understood by all political stakeholders in Southern Cameroons that the traditional rulers formed a powerful political force before 1966 especially those in the Bamenda Grassfield where chieftaincy was a sacred institution. But, their initial support for *secession* and *independence* was eventually replaced by support for *reunification*.

The main Southern Cameroons politicians were not, at least not overtly and publicly at campaign rallies, in favour of the territory’s independence as a separate political entity as was evident in the call by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the KNDP in February 1959 that Southern Cameroons should reunite with French Cameroon before the latter achieved its independence on 1st January 1960; the failure or inability of Southern Cameroons politicians to request it at the UN in February/March 1959; the KNDP (Foncha, Muna and Jua) failed to tell the British Secretary of State for the Colonies during their May 1959 Meeting in Lagos that they wanted a separate independence;

²⁵ Ibid, 508.

Foncha shied away from promoting *secession and a separate political entity* during his meeting with NUKS in Kumba on 30 July 1959; the politicians, traditional rulers and political pressure groups failed to adopt “secession and independence as a separate political entity” at the August 1959 Mamfe Plebiscite Conference; and finally, the SCHA was unable to adopt a motion tabled by Ajebe-Sone in September 1959 on the territory’s independence as a separate political entity.

In all fairness, realpolitik demanded empirical evidence that the demand for “secession and independence as a separate political entity” was the most popular option in the territory. As it has been discussed earlier, no political party and/or political pressure group openly had a clear-cut and straight forward position in favour of “secession and independence” as its political campaign platform during the 1953/54, 1957 and 1959 elections in the territory. This was because of the political climate which was dominated by Cold War politics; the pro-association Nigeria policy by the British; the anti-balkanization policy of the Afro-Asian Bloc at the UN; the political acknowledgement that it was not a vote-catcher; and, finally, the reported financial/economic inadequacy of a separate independent Southern Cameroons.²⁶ The reports on the financial/economic inadequacy of a separate Southern Cameroons were, however, questionable especially their conclusions. Victor E. Mukete observed that:

I regard all these [financial and economic] reports as a farce because those gentlemen must have known that there are many independent States in the world today, which could not have become independent States if the criteria which were being applied in the case of the British Cameroons had been applied to them.²⁷

All of these conditions still existed when political expediency dictated the need to play to the political gallery and led the same Southern Cameroons leaders to gamble on the notion of a “Third Option,” a “New Approach,” between October 1959 and November 1960 without an intrinsic political conviction.

26 See the following Reports: *Reports of Fiscal Commissioner on financial Effects of proposed New Constitutional Arrangements* (Lagos: Government printer, 1953), 21-22; *Phillipson Report on the Financial, Economic and Administrative consequences of the Southern Cameroons on separation from the Federation of Nigerian* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1959), 9; “The Economy of the Southern Cameroons: Survey by Dr. Kenneth Berrill,” December 1959, Qb/a/1959/7, NAB; and “Report on the Economic Aspect of possible reunification of the British Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon by Anderson 1960, Qb/a/1960, File No. CNR 258, NAB.

27 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 347.

The lone political party, the KUP, which campaigned for the territory's attainment of independence as a separate political entity was not invited as a member of the Southern Cameroons delegation to the UN. This was because the KUP was not represented in the SCHA. The KUP voice which was, later in revisionist writings on the decolonization of Southern Cameroons, wrongly thought that it represented the most popular option was absent from the Southern Cameroons delegation to the UN in September 1959. The KNDP, KNC-KPP alliance and the traditional rulers did not consider revisiting the non-inclusion of the KUP in the delegation nor found it unacceptable that the KUP was absent.

According to Mbile, "this arrangement [of having only the representatives of the KNDP and the KNC-KPP alliance] was to enable both points of view from Southern Cameroons to be heard...."²⁸ The "both points of view" were the position of the KNDP and that of the KNC-KPP alliance; that of the KUP was excluded, but not by the UN nor by the UK but by the dictates of Southern Cameroons politics. There was no serious request for the secession of Southern Cameroons from Nigeria and its independence as a separate political entity to any of the four UN Visiting Missions to the territory in 1949, 1952, 1955 and 1958.

First Pan-Kamerun Students Conference, Yaounde, August 1959

The position of the KNDP which Foncha lucidly spelt out in Kumba in July 1959 during the First Annual Convention of NUKS was restated, in substance, at the First Pan-Kamerun Students Conference which held in Yaounde from 27-30 August 1959. The terms of reference for the conference included the examination of the problems which *reunification* faced. The conference was attended by eight students representing British Cameroons; Gorji Dinka from London and Albert Mukong from Nigeria re-enforced the Southern Cameroons delegation. From French Cameroon, there were ten French Cameroonian students, including Thomas Melone from France. The conference was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister Michel Njine of French Cameroon while Premier Foncha sent a message to the conference. In relation to *reunification*, Foncha stated that the KNDP must win the upcoming plebiscite, and *reunification* should not be a condition for secession from Nigeria.

Foncha emphasized that the primary objective of the Southern Cameroons government and the KNDP was *secession* from Nigeria and that *reunification* was a "domestic affair" which had to be addressed by the Governments of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons.²⁹ The conference ended with a resolution on *reunification* which

²⁸ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 130.

²⁹ Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 319-320; Abwa, *Cameroun*, 373.

called on “the two Governments of Western and Eastern Kamerun... to establish as soon as possible an official committee which should help to plan for reunification...”³⁰ Foncha, similar to his address to NUKS, never mentioned the independence of Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity. Abwa has explained that while the British Southern Cameroons students and Foncha talked about *reunification*, French Cameroon students ignored or avoided the subject.³¹

This was very telling because it later became “fashionable” and popular in Southern Cameroons historiography that the UN and more especially the UK rejected the territory’s most popular option: independence as a separate political entity.³² It was within this context that the leaders of the KNDP and the KNC-KPP alliance made another trip to the UN in New York in conformity with UN Resolution 1350 (XIII) of 13 March 1959. Small wonder that almost 56 years later, an aggrieved section of the population of the North West and South West Regions (former Southern Cameroons) demanded “secession and independence” from the Republic of Cameroon which plunged the country into a prolonged “low intensity” bloody conflict with dire human and socio-economic consequences on the population of the two regions from November 2016 (the armed conflict was on-going after 2022).

UN Again and the “Third Option”

The Southern Cameroons delegation to the UN General Assembly’s 82-nation Trusteeship Council Session of September-October 1959 comprised Premier Foncha and ST Muna for the KNDP and Dr. EML Endeley for the KNC-KPP alliance; the delegation also included the Commissioner for Southern Cameroons John O. Field³³ and his Deputy, Malcolm Milne. On 15 September 1959, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, held a working dinner with the Southern Cameroons delegation in London to resolve the political differences regarding the future of the territory.

The working dinner bridged the political divide between the KNDP and the KNC-KPP alliance. At the Fourth Committee meeting of the UN on 30 September 1959, Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley, supported by the UK, produced a compromise agreement which

30 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 320.

31 Abwa, *Cameroun*, 375.

32 See for instance, Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 130-133.

33 John Osbaldiston Field (born in 1913 and died in 1985) was a British administrator and principal Assistant secretary of the federation of Nigeria. He was Commissioner of southern Cameroons after Brigadier Gibbons.

would later be popularized as the “Third Option” and it became UN Document A/C4/414 for an independent Southern Cameroons;³⁴ an alternative which Kale had argued for unsuccessfully at the Mamfe Plebiscite Conference and the SCHA had failed to adopt a motion to that effect in early September. Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley also proposed that the plebiscite should be postponed and British trusteeship over Southern Cameroons should be continued.

The Soviet Union and French Cameroon, however, rejected the “Third Option” for different reasons. The Soviet Union argued that the future of British Cameroons and French Cameroon “should be examined together... and the reunification realized at the same time as its independence.”³⁵ This was the position of the Soviet Union during the February-March 1959 UN session. All along, the Soviet Union did not hesitate to point out that the compromise agreement and the framework for its implementation was a Trojan horse designed to prolong British colonial imperialism in the territory. The Soviet position reflected its anti-colonial policy which it championed after World War II.

In the view of French Cameroon, the Foncha-Endeley agreement failed to take into account the British Northern Cameroons because, as French Cameroon pointed out, the request for the extension of the trusteeship and the plebiscite did not include British Northern Cameroons. As the debate moved back-and-forth, the Guinean delegate at the UN, Diallo Alpha, lucidly presented the most logical position when he said: “it was only logical that a country under colonial rule should first of all obtain independence and then if it wished, it could enter into [an] alliance.”³⁶ This was, of course, contrary to the position of the KNDP after its NEC meeting of 2-3 February 1959. At that meeting, the resolution adopted by the NEC resolved that Southern Cameroons should be allowed to join French Cameroon before the latter obtained its independence in January 1960.³⁷

Later, on 7 October 1959, Premier Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley issued another joint agreement which called for the territory’s attainment of independence in 1960 and the postponement of “the plebiscite for the time being.” Both leaders agreed that the territory should be separated from Nigeria and the UK should continue administering it as a UN trust territory.³⁸ Although the US representative, Clement J. Zablocki, explained

34 Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 100.

35 *AFP Bulletin*, 18 janvier, 1959, VI; see also Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 84.

36 Fondi Ndifontah Nyamndi, *Foreign Interest in the British Cameroons plebiscites* (Yaounde: Buma kor publishers, 2004), 118.

37 *AFP Bulletin*, 7 février 1959, IV; see also Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 92.

38 Chem-Langhëë, “The Kamerun Plebiscites,” 196.

that the US “would not support any decision which ran counter to the wishes of the people whom Mr. Foncha and Endeley represented” and the Pakistani representative advanced that “the Committee should not presume to be more Cameroonian than the Cameroonians themselves,”³⁹ the Soviet Union and its allies rejected it.

The Soviet Union argued that the joint agreement was an “imperialist manoeuvre to prolong colonial domination” and that it was contrary to UN Resolution 1350 (XIII) of 13 March 1959. The African Group at the UN vehemently rejected the joint agreement and argued that independence as a separate political entity promoted the balkanization of Africa. A last-minute suggestion by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld that Premier Foncha, President Ahidjo, a Nigerian representative and Dr. EML Endeley should meet in March 1960 to salvage the “Third option” proved futile.⁴⁰ The Southern Cameroons leaders returned to their previous uncompromising position which revolved around *reunification* and *association*.

According to Chem-Langhëë, Foncha “unwisely... stated [at the Fourth Committee of the UN] that there was need for only two questions at the plebiscite” which precluded any third alternative/question.⁴¹ Foncha and Endeley, however, agreed that one of the two alternative questions at the plebiscite should be *association* with Nigeria. Foncha wanted the second alternative question to be “separation from Nigeria and continued trusteeship until Southern Cameroons were in a better position to decide their future.” Endeley, on the other hand, wanted the second alternative question to be “reunification with the French Cameroons after the territory [French Cameroon] becomes independent on 1 January 1960.”

Foncha rejected Endeley’s position and argued that separation would leave “the doors open for the building up of a greater Cameroon nation” and stated that it was “nothing short of treason that anyone for selfish motives should want his country to be engulfed by another.” Endeley countered Foncha’s argument on the second alternative question asserting that he did not want Foncha and the KNDP “to take the territory and its people on a joy ride to an unknown destination” and because of that he “insisted on the second question... to indicate somehow that reunification is the ultimate policy towards which... [the Foncha] government shall work after separation.”⁴²

After lengthy and intensive negotiations, Ms Angela Brooks of Liberia who had been

39 Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 101.

40 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 130-131.

41 Cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 94.

42 SCIS, B, “Premier and Opposition Disagree at UN By Reuter, “*Press Release No. 485, 2, NAB.*

active in backstage talks between the African Group and Foncha and Endeley, finally produced a draft resolution which was tabled to the Trusteeship Committee in October 1959. The draft resolution was subsequently adopted by the Fourth Trusteeship Committee of the UN General Assembly by a vote of 74 to zero with two abstentions as UN General Assembly Resolution 1352 (XIV) of 16 October 1959. The Resolution spelt out the two questions in the plebiscite as follows:

1. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria?

OR

2. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon?

The resolution also stipulated "that only persons born in the Southern Cameroons, or one of whose parents was born" in the territory were eligible to vote, Resolution 1352 (XIV) drew swift mixed reactions from Southern Cameroonians.

Reactions in Southern Cameroons

The reactions from Southern Cameroonians came, broadly speaking, from KNDP supporters who opposed the resolution unlike the KNC-KPP alliance, the OK and the Kamerun Society which approved it. Foncha, before leaving for the UN, had promised his KNDP members and sympathizers that Southern Cameroonians would be granted independence and a transitional period during which the territory would negotiate reunification with French Cameroon. In addition, Foncha had also promised to secure an extension of the trusteeship period after separation from Nigeria.

The compromise resolution, UN Resolution 1352 (XIV), instead meant *immediate reunification* after the plebiscite should the *reunification* option win at the polls or *immediate association* should *association* win at the polls. Actually, *immediate reunification* was so unpopular that at the KNDP Convention in Kumba, after the 1959 General Elections, some KNDP officials, especially those from Mamfe Central Constituency (Mamfe West) led by WNO Effiom, pointed out that although their people believed in secession from the Federation of Nigeria, they were vehemently opposed to *immediate reunification*.⁴³ The opposition to the resolution was so intense that Jua, the Deputy KNDP leader and acting Premier at the time, wired Foncha and expressed the disapproval of the KNDP to the compromise resolution. It was believed, at one

43 Letter from I.N. Malafa to The Secretary, Kamerun Students' Strategic Committee, dated 10th May 1959, reproduced in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 322.

moment, that the KNDP leadership contemplated replacing Foncha as the Premier.⁴⁴

The most organized reaction against the resolution, however, came from the KUP. The KUP stated that Southern Cameroons should achieve independence in its own right as a separate political entity. It also argued that the Trusteeship Agreement guaranteed the Cameroons “the right to the enjoyment of self government or independence ... even if Nigeria had not set the ball rolling.”⁴⁵ The Executive Committee of the KUP met in Buea on 24 January 1960 and rejected the resolution on the plebiscite and qualified it as “an imposition.” The KUP condemned it because it demonstrated “the lack of faith and trust [by the UN] in the people ... of the Southern Cameroons” and warned that it would call on all Southern Cameroonians “to abstain from voting or to mutilate their ballot papers as a protest against the plebiscite”⁴⁶

However, some political parties and pressure groups supported the resolution. The KNC-KPP alliance, the OK and the Kamerun Society applauded the adoption of the resolution. The KNC-KPP alliance knew that *reunification* as an alternative question meant *immediate reunification* which was less popular than *association* with Nigeria. In addition, the KNC rejected secession/separation from Nigeria with the goal being a separate political entity. As Jeremiah Chi Kangsen, a KNC member in the SCHA from Wum Central, said in the SCHA debates in September 1959: Southern Cameroons was not able to stand alone in this “atomic age” without association with either the Federation of Nigeria or reunification with French Cameroon.⁴⁷ In spite of these reactions, Southern Cameroons leaders embarked on an explanation “campaign” of the soundness of their preferred alternative question: *reunification* or *association*. It is appropriate at this juncture to discuss the failure of the quest for a “Third Option”.

44 Interview with Vincent T. Lainjo Buea, 25 May 1989. Lainjo (born in 1910 and died in 2010) was elected a Southern Cameroons representative from Bamenda Division to the Eastern Regional House of Assembly from 1951 to 1953. He was a member of the “Benevolent Neutrality Bloc” and became a KNC member. He was a Minister of Natural Resources and later Social Services in the Endeley-led KNC-KPP government. He was a staunch supporter of Southern Cameroons attaining independence in association with Nigeria. He was once Acting Premier of Southern Cameroons in 1958. On the subject of contemplating the dismissal of Foncha, also see Victor T. LeVine, *The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence* (California: University of California press, 1964), 210.

45 Kale, *Political Evolution*, 69.

46 Kamerun United Party, Vab (1959), File No. P. 310/S.8; Kamerun Peoples Party Area headquarters, Buea, Vb/b/1947/1, NAB.

47 SCIS, B, “House of Assembly Debates: Motion on Plebiscite Questions and Qualifications, 9th September 1959,” *Press Release No. 468*, NAB.

Failure of the Quest for a “Third Option”, September-October 1959

The sudden change of heart by Premier Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley during their working dinner in London with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lennox-Boyd, in September 1959 definitely raised eyebrows within informed circle for several reasons. First of all, the KNDP never supported, overtly or covertly, a permanent separate independent Southern Cameroons. As explained by Mukete, Foncha's creation of the KNDP in 1955 was because he, Foncha, discerned “attempts by Endeley to move away from the party's [KNC] policy of reunification, [and he] made a strong objection and walked out of the meeting. He was joined by Jua and others.”⁴⁸ Foncha, in June 1965, stated in Buea that the “Third Option” was rejected because it was not on the political platform of the KNDP. According to Foncha, “as independence as a separate country of Southern Cameroons was NEVER in the KNDP programme, it was rejected [Emphasis added].”⁴⁹ The KNC-KPP alliance had never called for an independent separate Southern Cameroons and the British policy was consistently tailored towards the territory's attainment of independence in association with Nigeria. But for the KUP, no political party in the territory called for a permanent separate independent Southern Cameroons.

The political sincerity of these three actors (the KNDP led by Foncha, the KNC-KPP alliance led by Dr. EML Endeley and the British led by the Colonial Office) was very doubtful, to say the least. The ultimate goal of the KNDP was for the territory's achievement of independence by reuniting with French Cameroon. This was clearly evident in the KNDP's request for financial assistance from Soppo Priso and the *Union Nationale*; the substantial financial and material support from French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons led by Joseph Henry Ngu to the KNDP; and, the numerous occasions which the KNDP refused to support a separate independent Southern Cameroons if it was not meant to ultimately lead to reunification. Foncha explicitly and unambiguously explained the KNDP position of an independent Southern Cameroons in July 1959 at the NUKS Convention in Kumba when he said: “We have therefore set out to fight for separation without which the ultimate objective [of reunification] will never be achieved. We believe that for the time being reunification must be kept aside in order to have a place to stand before looking for reunification.”⁵⁰

48 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 105.

49 “Dr. JN Foncha's message to His Honour AN Jua, Prime Minister and the People of West Cameroon, Before His Departure to Yaounde to Assume His Duties as Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon 1st June 1965.”

50 Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 337.

The KNC, on its part, entered into a secret agreement with the AG of Chief Awolowo in August 1954 which led Dr. EML Endeley to swallow association with Nigeria hook, line, and sinker. In his "Major Policy Statement" of May 1958, Premier Endeley never called for a separate independence for Southern Cameroons. In working secretly with RJK Dibonge, Dr. EML Endeley nurtured and fanned the flame of Southern Cameroons independence in association with Nigeria. The British support of the Foncha-Endeley compromise agreement, the "Third Option," was cynical at best. There is complete agreement that the British policy towards British Cameroons since 1922 was to direct the territory towards independence in association with Nigeria and there was no British support, whatsoever, for a separate independent Southern Cameroons.

In May 1959, the British CO noted that a separate independent Southern Cameroons "would be a poor weak country ... unable to stand alone and would have to accept whatever terms were offered them."⁵¹ In August 1959, the Deputy Commissioner for Southern Cameroons, in opening the Mamfe Plebiscite Conference, repeated Lennox-Boyd's advice to Southern Cameroons leaders at the 1957 London Constitutional Conference that the "best friends of Southern Cameroons preferred that the territory should achieve independence in association with Nigeria." Later in August 1959, the CO insisted "that the independence for such small state seem [ed] nonsense."⁵² On 10 June 1960, the British, once more, clearly articulated their position in a confidential letter from Godfrey Caston of the UK Office at the UN, writing on behalf of Andrew Cohen, to Christopher Eastwood of the CO. In the letter, Caston stated that: "we [the British government] ought now to use all our influence to prevent this third option question idea from being raised at the United Nations."⁵³ The British understood the post-World War II Cold War bunker mentality and counted on the USA and France to contain the UPC and its "allies" during UN debates on Southern Cameroons independence.

The UPC, between 1952 and 1960, threatened the stability of both French Cameroon and Southern Cameroons through its terrorist activities. The UPC received support from the USSR and China as well as from Egypt, Ghana and Guinea. This did not leave Britain, France and the US indifferent. The British, French and American fear was that an independent Southern Cameroons would be a victory for the communist bloc as the territory would be easily taken over by the anti-capitalist bloc. Foncha, therefore, had to take into consideration the British anti- independence policy towards Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity. The British were aware of the bloody French

51 C. Eastwood to A. Emanuel, 25 may 1959, CO 554/1756, TNA.

52 Letter to the Colonial Secretary on the Mamfe Conference, 17 August 1959, CO554/1756, TNA.

53 Cited in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 419.

colonial war in Algeria and the Mau Mau Revolt⁵⁴ against the British in Kenya. These two events added to the fear that an independent separate Southern Cameroons would provide cannon fodder for the UPC.

The failure of the leaders of Southern Cameroons to discuss their “new-found thought” on a “Third Option” in Southern Cameroons, much less discuss the KUP position at the Mamfe Plebiscite Conference, was nothing short of lack of political sincerity. It demonstrated a willingness to play to the political gallery whereas their political interests were intricately tied to *reunification* with French Cameroon (KNDP) or *association* with Nigeria (KNC-KPP alliance); Britain also supported *association* with Nigeria. In short, the million francs CFA question was: “what suddenly changed the socio-political equation in Southern Cameroons that led Premier Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley to accept the suggestion of the territory’s independence as a separate political entity and proposed it at the UN session.

Be that as it may, none of the petitions, written and/or oral, submitted to the UN Visiting Missions to Southern Cameroons (1949, 1952, 1955 and 1958), requested the territory’s independence as a separate political entity. The failure of Premier Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley in securing a “Third Option” at the September-October 1959 UN session left them with no other choice except to return home and strategize on the best methods to disseminate the advantages of their respective options: *reunification* by the KNDP and *association* by the KNC-KPP alliance. Interestingly, in November 1959, the Secretary of State for the Colonies informed the British House of Commons that neither Premier Foncha nor Dr. EML Endeley wanted independence as a separate political entity.⁵⁵

In November 1959, ST Muna held informal talks with some members of government of French Cameroon and other prominent persons on the future relationship between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon. It emerged from the discussions that Southern Cameroons, at least the KNDP, was not a committed soldier for the independence of Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity. In fact, during the informal discussions and according to a *Press Release*, Muna clearly expressed the view

54 The Mau Mau Revolt (1952-1960) was very costly and Kenyans in terms of human, financial and infrastructural cost in addition to the socio economic destruction. In terms of human lives, about 12,000 Mau Mau fighters were killed although the unofficial report put the number at about 20,000; civilians and 32 white settlers were killed; 200 British police and soldiers were killed; and in 1,090 convicts were hanged after the rebellion. The Mau Mau Revolt cost the British about £5million. There is doubt that the UPC threat to “rain hell in Southern Cameroons” was not taken lightly by Britain and the international community especially given what was unfolding in Belgian Congo at the time.

55 Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 35.

that:

Unification between the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of the Cameroons might take the form of a loose Federation with the aim of preserving the individuality of the Southern Cameroons state which, at the same time, will enjoy the advantages of federation with the Republic of the Cameroons.... His views found favour with the French [Cameroon] Ministers, who, it appeared, had been thinking along similar lines.⁵⁶

It was obvious that the Foncha government and the KNDP were more interested in securing reunification, unification, than the territory's independence as a separate state.

Southern Cameroons Prepared for Plebiscite

The UN Resolution 1352 (XIV) of 16 October 1959 was welcomed by Premier Ahidjo of French Cameroon although the option of *reunification* was received with mixed feelings within the KNDP. Ahidjo regarded the *reunification* option as a tactical manoeuvre rather than a deep political conviction. He initially regarded reunification essentially as a strategic move to pull the rug under the UPC. In accepting the resolution, Southern Cameroons political leaders had an uphill task because of the trench warfare mentality that the KNDP and the KNC-KPP alliance adopted in defending their respective positions. The KNDP and the KNC-KPP alliance counted on financial, logistics and human resources from French Cameroon (KNDP) and from Nigeria ((KNC-KPP alliance).

KNDP and its Allies

At a non-governmental and private level, reunificationist forces in French Cameroon led by Soppo Priso's *Union Nationale* provided financial resources, logistics and a printing press with the necessary equipment to the KNDP in December 1959. At the governmental level, Ahidjo threw his political weight and that of French Cameroon behind Foncha and the KNDP before the October 1959 UN Resolution. In February 1959, for example, Premier Foncha was allowed to address a message to the people of French Cameroon. In the message, Foncha re-assured French Cameroonians that they "should not worry when the KPP or the KNC falsely tell you that my [KNDP] government is reversing from the noble objective of reunification."⁵⁷ In November 1959,

56 SCIS, B, "Mr. Muna Explores Unification Issue with Ministers of Cameroun Republic," *Press Release No. 618*, 4 January 1960.

57 *AFP Bulletin*, "Le message de M. John Ngu Foncha au peuple Cameroun sous tutelle française, adressée en exclusivité à La Presse du Cameroun, » 28 février 1959.

ST Muna met with some members of Ahidjo's government and discussed the form which *reunification* would take if it won at the plebiscite. Whereas Muna intimated that the union between Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon "might take the form of a loose federation," the French Cameroon delegation did not make any commitment.⁵⁸

Although Foncha had, on several occasions, sent pro-reunification messages to French Cameroonians in French Cameroon, the 1st of January 1960 proclamation of the independence of French Cameroon (which became the Republic of Cameroon) by Ahidjo gave Foncha, as Ahidjo's official invitee, the unique national and international stage in the presence of several foreign dignitaries to package and sell his reunification option to the population of the Republic of Cameroon and to Southern Cameroonians.⁵⁹ Foncha led an eleven-person delegation to the independence celebrations of the Republic of Cameroon and, in his address, expressed his unconditional wish for reunification. In putting all his cards, including his joker, on the table even before the plebiscite, much less before the negotiations after the victory of reunification at the polls, Foncha left Southern Cameroons at the mercy of Ahidjo and his French advisers. In his address, Foncha lauded Southern Cameroons immense desire for reunification in the following words:

Today, we of the Southern Cameroons see the beginning of the unity of our great country in the independence of Eastern Kamerun ... the shortest course to unity of the two sectors is through independence. I have all along been immensely impressed with the unanimity of the demands for the independence and reunification in Eastern Kamerun, a unanimity which obliged even the UN to rule out the need for a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people...I would like to assure you [Ahidjo and the people of the Republic of Cameroon] that we of the other sector of Kamerun [Southern Cameroons] are working hard to make possible the coming into being of this great country of Kamerun.⁶⁰

58 SCIS, B, "Mr. Muna Explores Unification Issue with Ministers of Cameroon Republic," *Press Release No. 618*, 4th January, 1960, NAB.

59 The foreign dignitaries included the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld; Mrs. Golda Meir, Minister of trade for Israel; Louis Jacquinot let the French delegation; Henri Cabot-Lodge, personal representative of US President Eisenhower; Modiba Keita, Prime Minister of Sudan and president of the Federal Government of Mali; Leopold Sedar Senghor; President of the Federal Assembly of Senegal; Dr. Adnan Al Pachachi, Iraq's Permanent Delegate to the UN; H.E Mgr. Maury, Apostolic delegate representative of the holy see; Paul Comtois represented Canada; Yang Chi Tsang of nationalist china (Taiwan); M. Filioubine of the Soviet Union; Premier John Ngu Foncha of Southern Cameroons; and, the British representative.

60 SCIS,B, "A speech by Hon. J.N. Foncha , Premier of Southern Cameroons on the Occasion of the

Foncha, in the same address, literally, handed over the diplomatic and foreign relations initiatives of Southern Cameroons to Ahidjo and the Republic of Cameroon saying:

Now free, we have given you [Ahidjo and the Republic of Cameroon] the option to forge ahead with international negotiations for diplomatic relations. We, however, knowing what we are looking for, would advise that we be consulted in any such international relations within the free countries of the world.⁶¹

Surely, Foncha gave away everything and Ahidjo definitely took note. This was because Ahidjo never mentioned nor made any reference in his proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Cameroon to the idea or concept of *reunification* with Southern Cameroons. Several meetings between Ahidjo and Foncha as well as between ministers of the two governments were held in the course of 1960 and both parties tried to sweeten the reunification pill. Ahidjo, for instance, did not hesitate to tell the population of the Republic of Cameroon that "the reunification of the two Cameroons [was] a matter above all for Cameroonians, for the Cameroonians of our Cameroun and the other Cameroonians."⁶² This definitely found a soft spot in the political thinking of Southern Cameroonians. There is no doubt that Ahidjo was convinced that it was left for the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons to work out the terms of reunification; of course, Ahidjo knew that he had French advisers in his consultation room.

In Victoria, on 16 June 1960, Ahidjo stated that "40 or 50 years of colonization has not destroyed the brotherly links which has always existed between us."⁶³ In July 1960, Ahidjo met Foncha in Buea and both leaders supported *reunification*. Ahidjo, once more, re-iterated that "reunification must not signify annexation" while Foncha intimated that "our future place will be that of two brothers temporarily separated who, having recovered their liberty, return together to the country of their ancestors."⁶⁴ Foncha, however, in talking of "two brothers ... who, having recovered their liberty," failed or refused to recognize that the Republic of Cameroon was an independent sovereign political entity whereas Southern Cameroons was still a trust territory of the

Independence Celebrations of the Cameroon Republic," *Press Release*, No. 620, 6th January, 1960, NAB.

61 Ibid.

62 *La Presse du Cameroun*, 20 juin 1960.

63 Ibid., 176.

64 Cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 175.

UN. Further down the road, in July 1962 at the *Union Camerounaise* (UC) Congress in Ebolowa, Ahidjo made a similar assertion of returning to the “country of their ancestors.” Foncha’s apparent failure to grasp the political reality proved detrimental to Southern Cameroons in his negotiations with Ahidjo after the plebiscite which culminated in the Foumban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks of August 1961.

In pursuit of the preparations for the plebiscite and negotiations should *reunification* win at the plebiscite, another meeting between officials of the Ahidjo and Foncha governments was held in Yaounde in August 1960 and again in Buea during the same month. These and previous meetings created an atmosphere of brotherliness; Southern Cameroonians who wanted reunification basked in the “glory of oneness.” On 30 September 1960, Premier Foncha participated in the hoisting of the flag of the Republic of Cameroon at the UN Headquarters in New York which was organized by the Government of the Republic of Cameroon. Meanwhile, unlike the KNDP, the KNC-KPP secured a firm undertaking from Britain and Nigeria on the position of Southern Cameroons in the Federation of Nigeria should the voters opt for *association* with Nigeria.

In May 1960, British and Nigerian officials met in London and produced the details of the *association* between Southern Cameroons and the Federation of Nigeria should the former opt to attain independence in association with Nigeria. In case of a victory for *association*, they agreed, the Federation of Nigeria would comprise the following Regions:

- i) Northern Nigeria including the Northern Cameroons should the latter decide to join the Federation;
- ii) Western Nigeria;
- iii) Eastern Nigeria;
- iv) The Federal Territory of Lagos; and ,
- v) Southern Cameroons.

The Federation and each of its component regions would be a parliamentary democracy with Ministerial Councils responsible to the legislature; a Governor-General in case of the Federation; and, a Governor in the case of a region. Southern Cameroons would be a full self-governing region in the Federation of Nigeria.⁶⁵

65 *Southern Cameroon Gazette Vol. 7, No. 4, Southern Cameroons Plebiscite 1961: The Two Alterna-*

The British-Nigerian details for a possible Southern Cameroons *association* with Nigeria were followed by a pamphlet published by the KNDP in 1960 presenting the position of Southern Cameroons should it decide to achieve independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon. The pamphlet entitled “United Cameroons Federal Constitution” provided that Southern Cameroons would get into a union with the Republic of Cameroon under the following arrangements: Southern Cameroons would have:

- i) A Governor who would be a Head of State;
- ii) A House of Assembly;
- iii) A Police force; and,
- iv) A Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs

The President of the Federal Government would also be a Head of State. The “United Cameroons Federal Constitution” also indicated that “what the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon have agreed are the basic provisions of a Federal Constitution.”⁶⁶

The Republic of Cameroon, as it turned out, was not a party to the “United Cameroons Federal Constitution” although the KNDP erroneously indicated that the Republic of Cameroon subscribed to it. In a letter dated 30 May 1960, Deputy Commissioner Milne explained that the “draft proposal for reunification” was a workmanlike document which “might well prove the basis of your [Foncha] approach” to Ahidjo. Milne decided to withhold his comments on the “draft proposal” until Foncha had “gone one or two points more with Sir Sydney.”⁶⁷ Some of the proposals in the pamphlets were, at their face value, very unrealistic. In January 1961, Commissioner JO Field pointed out that the UK had not been officially notified of the “United Cameroons Federal Constitution.” This was surely another indication of Foncha’s total conviction and commitment to ensure the realization of reunification.

Before January 1961, Ahidjo and Foncha held a series of meetings in Yaounde from 10-13 October 1960 which ended with a resolution outlining the draft proposals for a constitution should reunification win at the polls. The draft proposals were adopted as “Outline Proposals for a Draft Constitution for a Federal United Kamerun Republic.” It was signed by Ahidjo and Foncha and provided, amongst others, that:

tives Buea: Government Press, 1961), 7.

66 KNDP, “United Cameroons Federal Constitution,” Mimeo, 1960, NAB.

67 Administrative Department, premier’s Correspondence, Vb/b 1960/5, NAB.

1. (A) They [Ahidjo and Foncha agreed] to do everything possible ... to implement the country wide desire for unification...
- (B) They reaffirmed that the territories [Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons] shall be unified as a Federal Sovereign State outside the British Commonwealth and the French Community...
2. The Federation shall compose of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons.⁶⁸

The document was viewed with some skepticism and JO Field stated that Foncha signed it as the leader of the KNDP because he did not have the competence to sign a treaty with a foreign power without the approval of the Administering Authority. The CPNC, for its part, criticized the "Outline Proposals" because the CPNC was not invited "to take part in the Yaounde discussions." The CPNC further questioned "the competence of Premier JN Foncha to conclude and sign an international agreement of such magnitude for and on behalf of the Government of Southern Cameroons."⁶⁹

The most important outcome of the October 1960 meetings and the "Outline Proposals" was that the proposals clearly sealed the fate of Southern Cameroonians in favour of a strongly centralized federation. The "Outline Proposals" spelt out the main terms of a federal constitution which were given form at Foumban in July 1961 and were constitutionalised at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks in August 1961. These were some of the actions which the KNDP and its allies took before November 1960 when another attempt was launched for the "Third Option." In June 1960, the KNC-KPP alliance merged during a convention in Mamfe and became the Cameroon People's National Convention (CPNC). In like manner, the CPNC and its allies took actions in preparation for the plebiscite.

CPNC Actions

The activities by Nigeria in support of the CPNC for *association* with Nigeria were relatively low-keyed in comparison to the KNDP which received support from the Republic of Cameroon, from pro-reunification groups in the Republic of Cameroon and from French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons. The deep-rooted animosity against Nigerians, especially Igbos, in Southern Cameroons was an open secret.

68 SCIS, B, "Reunification of Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon," *Press Release No. 1025*, 17th October 1960, NAB.

69 *Cameroons Champion*, 12 November 1960, 1-3.

Many Nigerians were indifferent to the political developments in Southern Cameroons and the internal Nigerian politics did not help the CPNC cause.

Although the KNC signed a secret agreement with the AG of the Western Region of Nigeria in August 1954 and the KPP overtly worked with the NCNC of the Eastern Region, the AG and the NCNC never worked out a common platform to assist the CPNC. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was not particularly enthusiastic with the associationist position of the CPNC because the NPC feared that it would tilt the political balance in Nigeria more in favour of the southern AG and NCNC parties. The NPC was more interested in securing British Northern Cameroons, for obvious political reasons, as part of the Northern Region of Nigeria. Whereas Ahidjo and Foncha held several meetings in 1960 as well as meetings between officials of the Ahidjo and Foncha governments, the CNPC did not have such political luxury from the Nigerian government; even from senior AG and NCNC officials.

It should be noted that Prime Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Head of the Government of Nigeria, visited Victoria in 1960 to galvanize the pro-association supporters of the KNC-KPP alliance. While in Victoria, Prime Minister Balewa "assured Southern Cameroonians of a great future and a secure place for them in the Federation of Nigeria" should they elect to achieve independence in association with Nigeria.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, on 29 February 1960, Dibonge informed Dr. EML Endeley that based on his discussions with Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Finance, "Nigerian political leaders are ever ready and willing to render us [the CPNC] ... assistance (financial, propaganda materials etc)." Dibonge, on behalf of the CPNC, requested 12 Land Rovers and trucks, £10,000 as a starter and propaganda experts.⁷¹

Quest for the "Third Option" Again

In spite of the public statements in support of reunification by French Cameroon officials, pro-reunification forces in French Cameroon and French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons, the spirit and popularity of reunification was dampened in Southern Cameroons by the UPC terrorist operations in the Republic of Cameroon. The attacks, once more, demonstrated and exposed the grave security concerns in the Republic of Cameroon and voices were raised within KNDP circles in Southern Cameroons against the two alternatives plebiscite questions. Within the CPNC, the incessant animosity against Nigerians, especially Igbos,

⁷⁰ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 141.

⁷¹ Ibid., 135-137; and see Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 436-437, both for the complete letter.

in Southern Cameroons increasingly reduced the popularity of *association* with Nigeria. In addition, the CPNC experienced dwindling financial and material support for its cause.

In the Republic of Cameroon, terrorist attacks by the armed wing of the UPC, the *Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun* (ALNK) and the *Sinistre de la Défense Nationale du Kamerun* (SDNK) in the Bamileke country, Mungo, Mbam and Nkam regions frightened Southern Cameroonians. For instance, in November 1959, the ALNK attacked the Bafang Catholic Mission and in December 1959, it was the turn of the Bangang Catholic Mission, amongst others. The ferocious bloody guerilla operations by the ALNK on the eve of 1st January 1960 in the Bamileke country, Mungo, Mbam and Nkam regions⁷² did not go unnoticed in Southern Cameroons. On 1st January 1960, the ALNK attacked certain neighborhoods in Douala especially the Gendarmerie Camp at Mboppi shortly before the proclamation of independence.⁷³

The sustained terrorist activities in the Republic of Cameroon which, at times, were also carried out in towns such as Tombel and the Bakossi country in Southern Cameroons led to the proclamation of a state of emergency in the Republic of Cameroon in May 1960. The state of emergency led to the restriction of individual and collective liberties and the brutal repression of the civilian population. Although these restrictions and brutalities were limited to the Republic of Cameroon, there were instances where the population living in areas in Southern Cameroons bordering Loum and Mbanga were attacked. These attacks were very detrimental to the reunification cause.

The KNDP and the reunification cause suffered momentarily when John Mondji (Mundi) Boja from Wum West crossed the carpet and joined the CPNC in March 1960. Boja's political action changed the political balance in the SCHA from 14 KNDP-12 CPNC to 13 KNDP-13 CPNC. There were several indications that some other KNDP Parliamentarians contemplated crossing to the CPNC. This had the psychological effect that the KNDP Government would collapse at any time; the Dickson Mbi Frambo saga was one of such indications.⁷⁴

In addition to the difficulties associated with security in the Republic of Cameroon, the political climate in Southern Cameroons was very unhealthy. According to Nfi, "the most effective way French Cameroonians supported reunification was to support

72 Abwa, *Cameroon*, 314.

73 Ibid.

74 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 141-147.

hooliganism and they did not shy away to intimidate, prevent from lecturing and if very necessary beat up lecturers or campaigners of the opposing" CPNC.⁷⁵ As Ndi rightly explains, "the campaigns had resulted in unknown bitterness, hatred and divisions among the political leaders in particular and people in general."⁷⁶ The KNDP was the governing party and the CPNC knew that the odds were against *association*. These difficulties in the Republic of Cameroon and in Southern Cameroons were well captured by BJ Greenhill of the British Foreign Office (FO) in a confidential document of October 1960.

Greenhill explained the reasons why Southern Cameroons political leaders accepted, once more, to attempt at getting the UK and the UN to approve a "Third Option." In the confidential document, Greenhill explained that:

The Government and opposition in Southern Cameroons were getting together to urge H.M.G. [Her Majesty's Government] and the United Nations that the plebiscite should be abandoned and Southern Cameroons given immediate independence on its own leaving the question of union with its neighbours for settlement later.⁷⁷

According to John O. Field, Southern Cameroons politicians embraced the "Third Option" because of the following reasons:

- Realization by Endeley and Co that vote is most unlikely to be for Nigeria;
- a) Doubts by all parties, as to the capacity of the Republic [of Cameroon] to replace Nigerian federal services and provide financial and economic support;
 - b) Instability of Ahidjo's Government and fears that [the UPC of Dr. Felix-Roland] Moumie may get into power⁷⁸

Meanwhile, earlier in September 1960, the British government enacted the *Southern Cameroons (Constitutional) Order-in-Council, 1960* which went operational on 1st October 1960 when the Federation of Nigeria attained its independence. The 1960

75 Nfi, *Celebrating Reunification*, 103.

76 Ndi, *South West Cameroon*, 131.

77 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 131; Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 328.

78 "Pa Foncha's Last Letter dated 30 December 1998 to the British government," *The Times*, 15-22 June 2000, 4; Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 131-132; and, Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 328. In view of the importance of the contents of the document in the territory's quest for a "Third Option," a fairly long reproduction of Greenhill's correspondence is imperative.

Order-in-Council provided for a House of Assembly; an executive headed by a Premier “who shall be appointed by the Commissioner;” Courts with a High Court for Southern Cameroons but “The Federal Supreme Court of Nigeria shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine appeals from the High Court” in Southern Cameroons; Finance; Public Service; Fundamental Rights; and, a House of Chiefs.⁷⁹ In spite of the fact that the 1960 Order-in-Council went operational on 1st October 1960 when Nigeria attained her independence, Southern Cameroons remained a trust territory until 1st October 1961 when it gained independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon.

This was the situation when Southern Cameroons politicians were forced to accept the political reality on the ground; that it was necessary to rethink the entire independence saga and that the Plebiscite should be called off. On both sides of the political divide, and including Kale of the KUP, the leaders of the KNDP and the CPNC met JO Field and expressed the need to revisit the plebiscite options. The CO was contacted and a meeting was arranged for November 1960 in London to demand independence as a separate political entity; the “Third Option” was, once more, revisited.

London Conference, November 1960

There was general sympathy for the predicament of Southern Cameroons and the chances of Southern Cameroons politicians getting the British support initially seemed bright. According to Vincent Lainjo, it was an open secret within informed Southern Cameroonian circles in Nigeria and Southern Cameroons that some British officials in the territory wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve independence as a separate political entity.⁸⁰ According to Dr. EML Endeley and Kale, JO Field and Macleod were willing to support the Southern Cameroons request. But, unfortunately, “after some time the atmosphere changed dramatically ... and so these other round-table talks ended in smoke.”⁸¹ What really happened?

79 Statutory Instruments 1960 No. 168 West Africa, Southern Cameroons (constitution) Order-in-Council, 1960, Vc/a (1960) 18, NAB.

80 Interview with Hon. Vincent T. Lainjo, Buea, 25 May 1989. Lainjo was a KNC member and he was once Acting Premier in the Endeley government in 1958.

81 Bongfen Chem-Langhëë and Martin Z. Njeuma, “The Pan-Kamerun Movement 1949-1961,” in *An African Experience in Nation-Building: The Bilingual Cameroon Republic since Reunification*, ed. Ndiva Kofele-Kale (Boulder-Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 53; Kale, *Political Evolution*, 70. The London Conference of November 1960 was attended by Premier Foncha, ST Muna, AN Jua, WNO Effiom, Fon Galega II and Chief SB Oben all from the KNDP; Dr. EML Endeley, Peter Motomby-Woletta, JC Kangsen and SE Ncha all from the CPNC; PM Kale for the KUP; Commissioner JO Field who chaired the conference and the Secretary of State for the Colonies Sir, Iain Macleod.

The British CO telephoned the UK delegation at the UN to inquire if there was any remote possibility of re-opening the Southern Cameroons file. The CO was assured that such a request would be dismissed by the Afro-Asian Bloc. However, declassified confidential reports provide a better understanding of the British rejection of the Southern Cameroons request for a "Third Option." Greenhill's confidential report to the CO that the KNDP government and the CPNC "were getting together to urge HMG" and the UN to abandon the plebiscite was, in confidence, passed on to Premier Foncha. Foncha reportedly leaked the position of the CO to Ndeh Ntumazah of the OK who, like the UPC, stood for immediate independence and immediate reunification.⁸² It was not in the political interest of Ndeh Ntumazah, the OK party and the UPC for Southern Cameroons to achieve independence as a separate political entity.

Ntumazah relayed the information to Dr. Moumie, the leader of the UPC, who was in Geneva, Switzerland. Dr. Moumie, with the subtle support of the African Group and President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, wired the UK representative at the UN, Sir Andrew Cohen, and warned him that should the UK undertake measures "to grant independence to the Southern Cameroons as a separate entity," the UPC would "rain hell in Southern Cameroons."⁸³ While the London Conference was still in session, Cohen cablegrammed JO Field stating:

REQUEST YOU SUSPEND TALKS AND LEADERS RETURN HOME FOR
PLEBISCITE [Emphasis in original].⁸⁴

In rejecting the Southern Cameroons "request," Macleod said that it was because "the UN in adopting the two alternatives of joining Nigeria or the Cameroon Republic clearly ruled out a period of continuing Trusteeship or separate independence for the Southern Cameroons."⁸⁵ The rejection of the "Third Option" was not only because the UN had adopted the "two alternatives" but also because the British never wanted Southern Cameroons to attain independence as a separate political entity and feared encountering "hell in Southern Cameroons."

82 Southern Cameroons Joint Intelligence committee reports 1960-61, Political Reports on Communism and Security, FCO 141/1683, TNA, cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 328.

83 Ibid. The UPC terrorist activities in the Republic of Cameroon, the Algerian War of Independence and the Congolese Civil War definitely scared the British.

84 Defence of Southern Cameroons 1960-61, Correspondence and Security Reports, 26, FCO 141/1619, TNA cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 329.

85 *Southern Cameroons Gazette Vol. 7, No. 4: Southern Cameroons Plebiscite 1961, The Two Alternatives* (Buea: Government Press, 1961), 4.

The only noteworthy outcome of the failed November 1960 London conference was the confusion it created in the minds of thousands of Southern Cameroons voters. Although the request was rejected, many Southern Cameroonians erroneously felt that the second alternative in the plebiscite was altered from “Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon?” to secession without reunification.”⁸⁶ This point was well articulated by Chief Stephen E. Nyenti of the Cameroons Commoners Congress (CCC) in the following words: “As a result of the London Talks [of November 1960], most natives believed that voting for the white box [reunification which was championed by the KNDP] means Southern Cameroons is breaking away from Nigeria to be a separate sovereign State.”⁸⁷

The failure of the conference also led to the erroneous belief that Foncha had demanded a five-year extension of the trusteeship agreement and received it. The possibility of the “Third Option” being accepted, however, was very slim given the international context at the time which was dominated by Cold War politics which impacted enormously on the decolonization process in Africa and Asia. In addition, and more importantly, the inability of Southern Cameroons politicians to reconcile their political differences and genuinely settle for independence as a separate political entity did not help the quest for a “Third Option.”

Understanding the Rejection of the Third Option” Again

There is no question that Britain wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve independence in *association* with Nigeria: the British never favoured Southern Cameroons being an independent separate state. By relying on financial/economic reports which were clearly designed to support the British policy, UN members and more especially those of the Afro-Asian Bloc used the excuse of financial insolvency to deny Southern Cameroonians the “Third Option.” This was in spite of UN Resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 which clearly stated that “inadequacy of political, economic ... preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.”⁸⁸

In 1960/1961, Southern Cameroons with a surface area of 42,000 sq. km and a population of 800,000⁸⁹ was more than each of the countries cited in Table II in population and surface area. In 1960/1961, The Gambia, for example, had a surface area of about 11,000 sq.km with a population of 250,000 and achieved independence in 1965 as a separate political entity. In early 1959, the British Colonial Office held that a union between The

86 Chem-Langhëë; *The Kamerun Plebiscite*, 212-215.

87 *Ibid.*, 213.

88 Ngoh, *The Untold Story*, 35.

89 See Article 60 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon

Gambia and Senegal would not be a good possibility because of The Gambia's "very dire" political and economic prospects.⁹⁰ But the "dire" warning did not prevent Britain from administering The Gambia successfully to independence in 1965 as a separate political entity.

A quick glance at some of the independent states in Africa as of 2012 (see Table II) demonstrated the political injustice which the UN members, led by Britain as the Administering Authority, did to Southern Cameroons.

2Table II: Some Independent African States with Population and Surface Area Less than Southern Cameroons

COUNTRY	AREA KM ²	POPULATION
Cape Verde	4,030	505,600
Sao Tome and Principe	960	162,800
Seychelles	450	81,972
Equatorial Guinea	28,050	677,300
Djibouti	23,206	864,202

Source: Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 422.

In October 1959, the "Third Option" was rejected and in November 1960, the situation had not changed. The Cold War mentality was still in place; France was still bleeding in Algeria; the UPC terrorist operations in the Republic of Cameroon had not reduced; and, the UPC directly threatened to "rain hell in the Southern Cameroons" should the territory be granted independence as a separate political entity. The new element in November 1960 was the Congolese Civil War which brought to the surface the inter-play of Cold War politics as Patrice Lumumba was accused of being a communist. The assassination of Lumumba in 1960, by US-Belgian forces, definitely played a role in Foncha's political calculations.

The decision on Southern Cameroons attaining its independence became tied, in the subconscious minds of the key actors, to the UN disastrous involvement in the Congolese Civil War. These factors re-enforced the British position that "we cannot expect to get any advantage from being foster-mother to an independent [Southern Cameroons] ... and the sooner we can ... wash our hands of it, the more pleased we

⁹⁰ Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 27-28.

shall be.”⁹¹ Foncha lamented in his letter to the British government in December 1998 that: “we wanted a 3rd Choice [independence without joining anybody] but the UK as the Administering Authority “told us that the 3rd question was completely ruled out.”⁹² The British argument that Southern Cameroons would not survive financially as a separate independent state was uncritically accepted by the African Group which was strongly influenced by President Kwame Nkrumah who never hid his support for the UPC.

Ms Angela Brooks of the African Group summed up the influence of the financial insolvency of the territory on the Group’s position by asserting that: “The plebiscite questions ... were to be framed in such a way ... to allay any apprehension that the Southern Cameroons might become independent as a separate entity.” They agreed that independence as a separate entity “should be ruled out in view of the territory’s limited economic potential.”⁹³ Of course, this was also within the context of Pan-Africanism which discouraged the balkanization of Africa in granting independence to African colonies.

The rejection of the ‘Third Option’ should also be viewed through the positions of the KNDP and the CPNC. The unrelenting and uncompromising support for reunification by Foncha and the KNDP could be deduced from the several major speeches which Foncha and his ministers made in-and-out of the SCHA before November 1960; and more especially, Foncha’s address on 1st January 1960 at the independence celebrations of the Republic of Cameroon in Yaounde. The CPNC (former KNC-KPP alliance) had never supported an independent separate Southern Cameroons before 1959, although in November 1960 it agreed “to work for the independence of a separate Southern Cameroons if colleagues of the KNDP abandon [re]unification.”⁹⁴ The CPNC knew that the “rejection” of Nigerians, especially Igbos, who controlled a very high proportion of the socio-economic life of the population of Southern Cameroons coupled with the party’s relatively meager financial and material resources were synonymous with the defeat of “independence by joining Nigeria.”

Although Foncha blamed the British for the rejection of the “Third Option,” in June 1965 he told West Cameroonians that the “*Third option was going to divide the people into three groups and further confuse [re] unification. But as independence as a separate country of Southern Cameroons was never in the KNDP programme, it was rejected*

91 Cited in Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 419.

92 “Pa Foncha’s Last Letter.”

93 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 306.

94 *Cameroons Champion*, 21 November 1960, 3.

[Emphasis added].”⁹⁵ To Foncha, therefore, what was most important was *reunification* and he did not want the “Third Option” to confuse the electorate. There is no denying that if “independence as a separate country of Southern Cameroons” was “in the KNDP programme, discussions and debates on the independence of the territory in 1959 and 1960 would have centered squarely on granting the territory separate independence or not. But, Foncha and the KNDP never wanted a permanent independent Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity. According to Foncha and the KNDP, the territory’s independence was aimed at eventually or ultimately reuniting with the Republic of Cameroon.

It is far from the truth to assert, as Ndi does, that “Foncha at *all times stood for independence for Southern Cameroons* and even so, independence before reunification....” [Emphasis added].⁹⁶ The rejection of the “Third Option” was not also “because Kale was not a Member of the House of Assembly [of Southern Cameroons] and also not because neither Foncha nor Endeley had proposed it,” as asserted by Fanso.⁹⁷ Gorji Dinka, on the other hand, blamed Foncha for the rejection of the “Third Option.” According to him: “The British saw that we were already ripe for independence. Unfortunately, when the opportunity came [at the UN], Foncha dashed it to the winds... [and] pleaded that the British should be allowed to stay a little longer because Southern Cameroons was not yet ripe for independence.”⁹⁸

The “Third Option” was rejected because of several reasons. Firstly, it was not in the British geo-political and economic interests to have an independent separate Southern Cameroons. The British exploited the absence of political consensus amongst Southern Cameroons politicians on the political future of the territory. Secondly, the Cold War climate clouded the objectivity of the UN and the eruption of the Congolese Civil War did not help the search for a “Third Option.” Thirdly, the British successfully aligned their rejection with the political goal of the African Group. Fourthly, a separate independent Southern Cameroons was not on the programme of the KNDP. Fifthly, it was the UN,

95 DR. J.N. Foncha’s Message to His honour A.N. Jua, Prime Minister, and the people of west Cameroon, Before His Departure to Yaounde to assume his duties as Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, 1st June 1965.”

96 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 269.

97 Fanso, *Cameroon History*, 141.

98 *The Times Journal*, “On Mission to Nigeria, SCNC Envoy Unveils Startling Revelations about the Republic of Ambazonia,” 3 August 2015, 7. Gorji Dinka and Albert Mukong were members of the Southern Cameroons delegation to the UN in September-October 1959. Dinka was the President of the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) in the UK and Mukong was the President of Kamerun Students in Nigeria.

and not the UK, that torpedoed the Southern Cameroons quest for a "Third Option." This is because the UN failed to respect Article 76 (b) of the UN Charter and principles as well as UN Resolution 1514 (XV) relating to the decolonization of colonies. The UN held onto the financial circumstances of Southern Cameroons in denying the "Third Option" to the electorate; a condition which was never applied to other African colonies or trust territories of the UN except to former German Togoland for a different reason.

In the final analysis, the UK administered Southern Cameroons on behalf of the UN and the latter had the last word and not the UK. This was the point which was succinctly stated by Koszcuisko-Morizet, the French delegate at the Trusteeship Council, when he said that "so long as the trusteeship had not been terminated, the territory [of Southern Cameroons] was still in the charge of the UN."⁹⁹ In support of the argument that it was the UN and not the UK that was responsible for the rejection of the "Third Option", the British forcefully advanced that "Her Majesty's Government has throughout acted under the supervision of the United Nations General Assembly" and the UK "as the administering authority" was obligated to "the UN ... [and not] to any particular member" of the UN.¹⁰⁰

The 1959 UN Resolution sanctioning a plebiscite was not regarded by some Southern Cameroons politicians as a permanent solution. It was believed that the voters were not politically equipped to distance themselves from the dictates of their fons and chiefs, the traditional rulers. This point was lucidly stated by NN Mbile to the UN Fourth Committee in September 1959 as follows:

Even a plebiscite would not serve to make clear what the real wishes of the people were, for they were still loyal to their tribal leadership; especially in the Bamenda grasslands, and might well vote against their own interests if such was the wish of their chiefs.¹⁰¹

There is no doubt that at the end of the day, the UN decolonization policy was largely dictated by the interests of the US, Britain, France and the Afro-Asian bloc at the UN. These countries and "the bloc" did not cherish an independent Southern Cameroons as a separate political polity and used the UN to achieve their goal. It was argued by some British politicians led by GM Thomson, MP for Dundee, East, that if the UK government had "fought much harder than they did at the United Nations...for a third choice," Southern Cameroons would have been given the choice of independence as

99 Nyamndi, *Foreign Interest*, 141.

100 Ibid., 150.

101 UNGA, A/C.4. SR.885 of 24 Sept. 1959.

a separate political entity.¹⁰² But, the national and international political climate and context at the time made this impossible. The UN failed Southern Cameroonians in 1959/1960 when the latter desperately needed the support of the international body; the UN deprived Southern Cameroonians from exercising their full political/democratic rights.

Southern Cameroons politicians returned home and picked up the hot potato from where they had left it before their trip to London. The CPNC castigated Foncha for the failure of the London Conference given that the main demand was the annulations of the plebiscite and the granting of independence to Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity. The situation in Buea in particular, and in Southern Cameroons in general, was not good for the KNDP. According to Mbile, “the KNDP virtually faced a crisis as Jua threatened to resign on the issue. The Grassfield mammies in Buea, counter-threatened to strip naked before him if Jua quit, and the Bobe of Kom unable to face the threats of the women piped down and the crisis passed.”¹⁰³

Foncha, according to Mbile and the CPNC, made several requests to the British which were rejected, namely: a “parting gift of £14 million; independence for Southern Cameroons after the plebiscite; and, a post-plebiscite constitution for Southern Cameroons.”¹⁰⁴ The British, according to NN Mbile, were dumbfounded by Foncha’s request; JO Field “was embarrassed; [and] Kale and Endeley were crest fallen.”¹⁰⁵ It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to reject the plebiscite results after the UN had organized and conducted a free and fair plebiscite and then turned around and granted “independence for Southern Cameroons after the plebiscite.”

Foncha, on the other hand, explained to Ahidjo that he presented the proposals for the constitution of the “United Federal Kamerun Republic” at the London November 1960 Talks and Sir Iain Macleod “accepted them as the wishes of the Government for reunification, but we did not arrive at an agreement on the means to implement the reunification.”¹⁰⁶ Foncha also used the occasion of his meeting with Ahidjo to refute allegations that he requested, and was granted, a five-year extension of British trusteeship saying that they were “baseless allegations and imaginations from a desire to

102 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

103 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 149.

104 *Cameroons Champion*, 21 November 1960; Mbile, *Cameroon political Story*, 148-149.

105 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 149.

106 “M. John Ngu Foncha á Yaoundé,” *AFP Bulletin*, 2 décembre 1960, 1.

create confusion in the minds of the people of British Cameroons during the envisaged plebiscite.”¹⁰⁷ At the Yaounde meeting between the delegations of Ahidjo and Foncha from 1-2 December 1960, a joint communiqué was signed by Ahidjo and Foncha and later published as *The Two Alternatives*.¹⁰⁸

The Two Alternatives spelt out that the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons agreed to unite in a Federal Republic of Cameroon and that the arrangements would be worked out after the plebiscite. In *The Two Alternatives*, federalism was regarded as the basis for reunification especially by Foncha. Ahidjo and Foncha agreed that the Federal United Cameroon Republic would neither be a member of the British Commonwealth nor of the French Community (*Francophonie*) and “official bilingualism would be embedded in the Constitution.”¹⁰⁹ Although Ahidjo had a different conception of *federalism*, Foncha never thought of a centralized federal system but rather of a “classical” federal system with wide autonomy exercised and enjoyed by the states in the federation. The failure of the November 1960 London Talks and the signing of *The Two Alternatives* by Ahidjo and Foncha in December 1960 sealed the issue of reunification.

In 1956, SA George had published his pamphlet entitled *Kamerun: Being a Discussion of a 7-Point Solution of the Unification Problem*. George outlined and discussed seven points which, he argued, were to lead to the reunification between British Cameroons and French Cameroon. The 7 Points were:

1. The United Nations General Assembly should be called upon to review the two separate Trusteeship Agreements with a view to providing for the interim administration of Kamerun under a joint trusteeship of the French and British Cameroons.
2. Her Majesty’s Government and the Government of the French Union should both enter into discussion after August 1956, with a view to the establishment of a Franco-British Commission to assume the functions now being performed by the Governor-General of Nigeria and the French Cameroun High Commissioner.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 185.

¹⁰⁸ *The Two Alternatives*, 4; Malcolm Milne, *No telephone to Heaven: from Apex to Nadir-Colonial Service in Nigeria, Aden, the Cameroons and the Gold Coast, 1938-61*. (Hans, England: Meon Hill Press, 1999), 422-423.

¹⁰⁹ Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 3.

3. There should be established a Franco-British Commission of Administration consisting of two members appointed by both the French and the British Governments respectively.
4. There should be established a Council of Ministers, the composition of which shall be all Kamerunians, including a Premier and two Joint Commissioners who will hold a joint Chairmanship or alternating Chairmanship of the Council.
5. There should be established a Parliament of two Chambers, the composition of which, apart from the Kamerun members, should include one European member, representing the 13,000 French Colons and other European interests.
6. For the purpose of determining representation in both 4 and 5 in respect of the indigenous Kamerun members, there should be recognition of three or four governmental units within the framework of the Kamerun nation. Each of these units should assume legislative and executive functions within and patterned according to the local level of political and social development of each respective unit.
7. Elections should be on a progressive system of popular elections in the less advanced areas and on full adult suffrage in more advanced areas, depending on the choice of the people.¹¹⁰

In the run up to the discussions on *reunification* from February 1959 to the signing of *The Two Alternatives* in December 1960, the KNDP did not initiate any discussion on the viability and practicality of any of the "Points" advanced by George. Neither did any conversation between Foncha and Ahidjo before 1960 make reference to George's *7-Point Solution of the Unification Problem*.

In a *Note Verbale* of 24 December 1960 from the Cameroon Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Okala, to the British Ambassador in Yaounde, the Ahidjo government recognized the October 1960 communiqué on the Ahidjo-Foncha Talks and the 1-2 December 1960 *Two Alternatives*. The Ahidjo government, in the *Note Verbale*, stated that reunification would be "on the basis of a federation." It also stated that it was "the expression of the official views of the Republic of Cameroon" and requested "that

¹¹⁰ SA George, *Kamerun: Being a Discussion of a 7-Point Solution of the Unification Problem* (London: Carey and Claridge, 1956), 6-7.

they be published for the purposes prescribed by the Trusteeship Council Resolution 2013 (XXVI).”¹¹¹ The quest for a “Third Option”, to all intents and purposes, was thus thrown into the dustbin of history. But, it was revived, dusted and presented again to Cameroonians and the international community during the armed internal conflict between 2016 and 2021 (see chapters five and six).

Conclusion

The Southern Cameroons search for independence did not initially involve independence as a separate political polity. Initially, Southern Cameroons politicians, without an exception, fought for a regional status within Nigeria rather than being administered as an integral part of Nigeria. The creation of the KNC following the fusion of the KUNC and CNF was on the basis of reunification with the Cameroons under French administration. While the KNC wanted reunification, the KPP wanted the territory to achieve independence in association with Nigeria. The traditional rulers, a powerful political force in Southern Cameroons socio-political life at the time, supported separate independence for the territory but later vacillated between separate independence and reunification.

The subsequent rejection of reunification by Dr. EML Endeley led Foncha and a group of KNC officials to bolt away from the party. The Foncha group created the KNDP which campaigned on a platform of secession from Nigeria and a period of continued British administration before deciding on either *reunification* or *association*. But the ultimate political goal of the KNDP was *reunification* with French Cameroon (the Republic of Cameroon). Before the creation of the KUP in February 1959, no political party in Southern Cameroons campaigned on a platform of the territory’s separate independence. The KNDP which had the support of the OK, the UPC, the pro-unification groups in French Cameroon and French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons, clothed *reunification* in the phrase: “secession and ultimate reunification.”

Although the KNDP had outlined, in a confidential letter to the *Union Nationale* in October 1956, the steps it would adopt towards achieving reunification for the territory, it failed to follow it through. It also did not initiate any discussion on George’s *7-Point Solution of the Unification Problem*. Britain rejected separate independence for Southern Cameroons and argued, wrongly, that the territory was not financially viable to survive as a separate independent political entity; the British wanted the territory to achieve independence in *association* with Nigeria.

¹¹¹ Cited In Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 121. UN trusteeship Council Resolution No. 2013 (XXVI) requested the Administering Authority to ensure that the people of the territory are fully aware of the political arrangements which would be effected after the plebiscite.

Southern Cameroons quest for independence was dominated by three options: reunification with French Cameroon; association with Nigeria; and, secession and independence as a separate political entity. It was generally believed after 1972 that the most popular option was "secession and independence as a separate political entity" but there was no empirical evidence to support the assertion. The KUP which campaigned on secession and separate independence fizzled out without attracting a reasonable following. In September/October 1959, Premier Foncha of the KNDP and Dr. EML Endeley of the KNC-KPP alliance (later CPNC), without any prior joint discussion, proposed the independence of Southern Cameroons as a separate political entity, "The Third Option," to the UN.

This was after they had failed to arrive at a political consensus on the political future of the territory. The "Third Option" attracted sympathy from some UN members in October 1959 but it was rejected; only to be revived in November 1960. Once more, it was rejected and Southern Cameroons electorate went to the polls on 11 February 1961 to decide on the two options: independence *by joining* Nigeria or independence *by joining* the Republic of Cameroon. The failure of the "Third Option' meant that the KNDP and the CPNC had to campaign on their long-held positions: the KNDP for *reunification* with the Republic of Cameroon and the CPNC for *association* with Nigeria. The next chapter examines the plebiscite campaigns; the approval of the results; and, the steps to implement UN Resolution 1608 of 21 April 1961.

PLEBISCITE AND ACCEPTANCE OF RESULTS

Introduction

The refusal by the international body, the UN, to accept granting independence to Southern Cameroons without any strings attached was not condemned vigorously by either the KNDP or the CPNC, the two main political parties in the territory. The KUP, CIP and CCC went off the political stage after the "Third Option" was rejected in November 1960. The KNDP re-affirmed its commitment to independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon as was outlined in the October 1960 Ahidjo-Foncha communiqué and the *Two Alternatives*. The Republic of Cameroon, through the *Note Verbale* of December 1960, re-affirmed its commitment to reunification "on the basis of a federation" as agreed in the October 1960 Ahidjo-Foncha communiqué and the *Two Alternatives*.

The CPNC also accepted the rejection of the "Third Option" and held on to its fervent belief in the territory's attainment of independence in association with Nigeria. UN Resolution 1514 (XV) of December 1960 and Resolution 1541 (XV) of December 1960 provided additional elements to UN Article 76(b) but, unfortunately, failed to explain what "Free association" and "Integration" meant. The organisation and conduct of the 11th February 1961 Plebiscite and the proclamation of the results form the core of the discussion which culminated in UN Resolution 1608 of 21 April 1961.

Understanding Resolutions 1514 and 1541

On 14 December 1960, UN Resolution 1514 (XV) was adopted and the next day, 15 December 1960, UN Resolution 1541 (XV) was also adopted. These two UN resolutions clarified the attainment of independence by trust territories and colonies. UN Resolution 1514 (XV) provided that "inadequacy of political, economic, social or education preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence." UN Resolution 1541 (XV) stipulated that a non-self-governing territory should attain self-government either by:

- a) Emerging as a sovereign independent state;
- b) Free association with an independent state; and,

c) Integration with an independent state.

UN Resolutions 1514 and 1541, unfortunately, muddled the waters with regard to Southern Cameroons and exposed, intentionally or not, the hypocrisy of the UN and the UK. The Resolutions collapsed the British stated argument that Southern Cameroons could not survive as an independent separate state because of economic or financial inadequacy. UN Resolution 1514 (XV) clearly ruled out economic inadequacy as a reason to deny a trust territory, in this case Southern Cameroons, the possibility of achieving independence as the population/electorate wanted. Secondly, Resolution 1541 in (b) “free association” and (c) “Integration” did not clarify what “independence by joining” meant. The KNDP believed that “independence by joining” meant “Free association” whereas Ahidjo and his team believed that “independence by joining” meant “integration.”

The political history of Cameroon, and more particularly that of the peoples of former Southern Cameroons, was bedeviled by the different interpretations given to the phrase “independence by joining.” However, “independence by joining” did not signify absorption, annexation, assimilation or loss of identity especially as Ahidjo and Foncha agreed that reunification would be on “the basis of a federation.” In picking up the pieces of the political hot potatoe on their return from London, Southern Cameroons politicians faced the harsh reality of campaigning for either joining the Federation of Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon.

Plebiscite Campaigns and Negotiations for Independence

The KNDP and the CPNC, the two major political parties, took on the campaign in full gears with the knowledge of the difficulties each party had in selling its plebiscite option. While the OK supported the KNDP because, like the UPC, it advocated immediate independence and reunification, the KUP, CIP and CCC abandoned the campaigns because their preferred option of independence as a separate political entity was rejected. In order to disseminate their campaign slogans and messages, the KNDP and CPNC had their party newspapers: the KNDP had the *Kamerun Times* while the CPNC had the *Cameroons Champion*.

KNDP and CPNC Campaign Slogans and Messages

The KNDP tailored its campaign slogan and messages on the historic and ethnic links between some ethnic groups of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons given that the said groups were administered at one time, 1884-1916, by the Germans as “one political entity;” the myth of a German Kamerun. The KNDP sold the ethnic

ties between the indigenes of the Bamum country and the Tikar of the Bamenda Grassfield especially with the indigenous population of the Nsaw country. Similarly, the ethnic links between the groups of the Bamenda Grassfield and those of the Bamileke (Dschang) in the Republic of Cameroon and the Bangwa in Southern Cameroons were highlighted by the KNDP. Of course, the partition of ethnic groups such as the Balong, Mbo, Bakossi and Duala which left their kith and kin in both territories was exploited by the KNDP in canvassing for reunification. French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons, in their overwhelming majority, carried the KNDP reunification banner for obvious reasons.

In addition, the deep-seated animosity against Nigerians, and more particularly the Igbos, in Southern Cameroons was a vote-catcher for the KNDP. The customs barrier between Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon created enormous difficulties between the two peoples along the border and these difficulties were exploited by the KNDP and its allies. Finally, the KNDP criticized the British administration of Southern Cameroons as an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria and blamed it for the neglect of the territory and its socio-economic underdevelopment. The KNDP condemned the British neglect with arguments such as: "we've been with Nigeria for forty years under British Administration: we have no roads, no government secondary schools, no nothing. It is about time we tried the other side of the border."¹

The CPNC, on the other hand, hammered on the blood-letting terrorist activities in the Republic of Cameroon as well as the generalized insecurity and terror in the Bamileke country, the Nkam and Mungo regions. The CPNC also spoke of ethnic ties between the Ejaghams in Mamfe Division and their kith and kin in the Cross River and Calabar country in Nigeria in its advocacy for *association* with Nigeria. In like manner, the CPNC emphasized the historic and ethnic ties between the indigenous population of Nkambe Division and their kith and kin in Northern Cameroons and Northern Nigeria. The CPNC exploited the terrorist operations in the Republic of Cameroon and compared them with the peaceful climate in Southern Cameroons and the British "way of life." In castigating the situation in the Republic of Cameroon, the CPNC message included the following:

Who amongst you would like to live in a country where your life and property are constantly in danger?

Who amongst you, peaceful citizens of the Southern Cameroons will like to live in a country where you may be shot at as you move along the street, or your wife killed as she toils on the farm?

1 Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation*, 149

Who amongst you, good citizens..., will like to live in a land where people's houses and shops are burnt every day and looted; where you can be arrested without fair trial?

Who amongst you would like to live in French Cameroons, a country red with the blood of thousands of innocent victims killed by terrorists and the Ahidjo regime?

Surely, None of You:

That is what will be our lot if we join French Cameroons.

In French Cameroon, there is no place for Chiefs. There is no House of Chiefs....

In the Southern Cameroons and Nigeria, political differences are settled by arguments and by the ballot box.

In French Cameroons political differences are settled by guns and poison.²

In its campaign messages, the CPNC ended by glorifying the Anglo-Saxon "way of life." It argued that it "was senseless to drop the British way of life for a French way of life. Never has England bowed before France and we of the Southern Cameroons shall never bow to France." It went on to say: "Twenty-five thousand Cameroonians have fled that Territory [Republic of Cameroon], but none has fled British Cameroons for French Cameroons. People are killed daily on the streets of Douala and Yaounde."³ The CPNC campaign, however, was timidly supported by the Government of the Federation of Nigeria headed by Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa⁴ compared to the open support of the KNDP by the Ahidjo government. On 22 January 1961, Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa addressed Southern Cameroonians in a Radio Message stating:

2 CPNC, *Plebiscite Message to all Voters of the Cameroons* (Lagos and Buea: n.p., 1960), 7-8.

3 Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation*, 148.

4 Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (born in December 1912 and assassinated on 15 January 1966 in Lagos, Nigeria) was a Nigerian politician. In 1946, he was elected to the Northern House of Assembly in Nigeria and to the Legislative Council in 1947. He was instrumental in transforming the cultural organization, *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa*, into the politically powerful Northern People's Congress (NPC). In 1951, he was elected into the Northern Regional House of Assembly under the Macpherson Constitution. In the 1957 general elections in Nigeria, the NPC won the plurality of votes and Tafawa Balewa became the Chief Minister and designated Prime Minister. He formed a coalition government of the NPC, NCNC and the AG. He was the first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria from 1st October 1960 until his assassination on 15 January 1966.

If you vote against Nigeria, I cannot see how you can avoid living a life of poverty and hardship and under the constant shadow of violence which the Government [of the Republic of Cameroon] cannot control. You will be putting up yourselves under a country which has different laws and completely different attitude towards life.⁵

This was not enough to counter the massive support Foncha and the KNDP received from the Ahidjo government. In addition, the anti-Igbo factor was too deep-rooted and wide spread in Southern Cameroons for the insecurity and fear which existed in the Republic of Cameroon to tilt the balance in favour of *association*.

In the course of the campaign, the KNDP, according to Chem-Langhëë, presented the alternative plebiscite questions at certain rallies as: "Do you like Dr. EML Endeley, the Bakweri man?" OR "Do you like Foncha, the Bamenda man?"⁶ In the same vein, Fanso writes that Dr. EML Endeley explained that "the plebiscite was generally understood only as an issue between those ethnic groups whose leaders were in the opposition and who wished to unseat the government."⁷ Whereas the KNDP took its campaign to all the six divisions in the territory including all the rural areas, the CPNC limited its campaign mostly in Victoria, Kumba and Nkambe Divisions. On 11th February 1961, eligible voters went to the polls and 233,571 voted for reunification with the Republic of Cameroon and only 97,741 voted for independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria;⁸ the KNDP thus emerged victorious.

Interpretation of Results: In Southern Cameroons

The KNDP jubilated over the results and a wave of hooliganism greeted its victory as supporters of the CPNC were molested and humiliated especially in Victoria Division. The KNDP won handily and an analysis of the results easily explains the KNDP victory. In the most populous division, Bamenda Division, whose three prominent sons namely Foncha, Muna and Jua were senior KNDP and government officials, the KNDP won by 108,485 votes as against 12,341 for the CPNC. The three prominent KNDP sons in the Bamenda Grassfield were also supported by Fon Galega II and Fon Achirimbi II, amongst other Fons. In Wum Division, with Jua leading the KNDP, the votes were 27,115 for the KNDP and 8,784 for the CPNC.

5 Federation of Nigeria fortnightly summary, Part 1, Nigerian Federal Prime Minister's Broadcast, 22 January 1961, CO554/2338, TNA.

6 Chem-Langhëë, "The Kamerun Plebiscites," 274.

7 Fanso, *Cameroon History*, 326.

8 SCIS, B, "Southern Cameroons Plebiscite," *Press Release No. 1217*, NAB.

In Mamfe Division, with politicians such as WNO Effiom and Peter M. Kemcha, the KNDP received 33,267 votes against 10,070 for the CPNC. In Victoria Division, Dr. EML Endeley failed to lead the CPNC to victory as the KNDP received 22,082 votes as against 11,916 for the CPNC. French Cameroonians in the Republic of Cameroon, especially those along the border towns and villages (Victoria, Tombel, Tiko and Misselele in Southern Cameroons and Loum, Mbanga, Babadjou in the Republic of Cameroon, for example) of the two territories, crossed over the borders and voted for reunification⁹. The best results for the CPNC came from Nkambe and Kumba Divisions.¹⁰

In Nkambe Division, the Wiyah and Tang clans which were not represented in the decision-making circle of the KNDP teamed up with the section of the marginalized Warr population in spite of PN Nsakwa being a KNDP member. A.T. Ngala from the Wiyah clan and J.T. Ndze of the Tang clan who were CPNC members successfully worked with the disgruntled section of the Warr population and led the CPNC to victory; the historic and ethnic ties between the indigenous population of Nkambe and Northern Nigeria favoured *association* with Nigeria. In Kumba Division which had a very influential and vibrant “colony” of French Cameroonians as residents and Chief Abel Mukete and the Bafaw as champions of reunification, NN Mbile led a spirited campaign and defeated the KNDP machinery by 32,733 votes for the CPNC and 27,600 votes for the KNDP.¹¹ Victor E. Mukete, a staunch and influential reunificationist, could not be involved in the campaign because as Chairman of the CDC Board of Directors, he had to steer clear from partisan politics.¹² The Orokos definitely stood in unison with their illustrious son, NN Mbile, and gave the CPNC victory. Needless to say the large voting population in Bamenda Division sealed the election in favour of the KNDP and, thus, *reunification*.¹³

The presence of large-scale plantations such as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), Elders and Fyffes and Bwinga Rubber Estate in Victoria Division attracted large number of workers from the Bamenda Grassfield, Nigerians and French Cameroonians.

9 John Percival, *The 1961 Cameroon Plebiscite: Choice or Betrayal* (Bamenda: Langaa, 2008), 63; Nfi, *Celebrating Reunification*, 106-107. Percival was one of the UN Plebiscite officials in Southern Cameroons for the 11th February 1961 Plebiscite in Wum.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Victor E. Mukete was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) on 1st February 1961.

13 It is important to bear in mind the 1961 Plebiscite Results in these Divisions when analyzing the intensity of the engagement of the populations of these divisions in the Anglophone Crisis (See chapters five and six).

Most of the workers from the Bamenda Grassfield and French Cameroonians voted for the KNDP while the indigenous population and more particularly the Bakweri voted for the CPNC. For instance, in 1960, the CDC had a total labour force of 17,622. The Bamenda “Grassfielders” made up 41.5 percent; Nigerians accounted for 26.9 percent; French Cameroonians made up 4.6 percent; and the indigenous population (Bakweri, Balong, etc) accounted for 27 percent.¹⁴ The plebiscite results shocked the CPNC especially given the wide margin of the KNDP victory. But J.M. Boja, who had decamped from the KNDP to the CPNC, provided an explanation, amongst others, for the KNDP victory.

On 17 February 1961, Boja wrote to the UN Trusteeship Council and condemned the organisation and results of the Plebiscite. He accused the ruling KNDP of intimidation of the electorate. He explained that the KNDP warned the chiefs that if they and their “subjects” did not vote for the KNDP option of reunification, they “shall be deposed or deported.” The chiefs, he went on, “asked their various subjects to vote for [re] unification, some went as far as to compel their subjects to take oaths.”¹⁵ According to him, the Chief of Mukuru village in the Wum West Constituency, for example, “assembled all the voters about the sixth of February, 1961, and asked them to do mock polling.” Boja maintained “that the people of the Southern Cameroons decided their future under great pressure by the KNDP as the Government Party [in power].” In a subtle chilling warning, he concluded in the following words:

As things have so happened in this way, I do not think the plebiscite could hold water. If it does, I as well as my party and my supporters wish to put clear our minds that the only resolution to avoid the Congo situation in the Southern Cameroons is to separate the unificationists from those who voted for the Federation of Nigeria.¹⁶

The CPNC was not, except in Nkambe and Kumba Divisions, a threatening political force in the territory after the January 1959 general elections. On 24 February 1961, Premier Foncha addressed the population of the Republic of Cameroon on the election victory as he received a congratulatory message from the government of the Republic of Cameroon. The CPNC condemned the results of the 11th February 1961 Plebiscite and requested that the territory should be partitioned according to the results.¹⁷ In

14 Sanford H. Bederman and Mark DeLancey, “The Cameroon Development Corporation, 1947-1977: Cameroonization and Growth,” in *African Experience in Nation-Building*, 268.

15 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2102, Wednesday, 24 March 2021, 8.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 154-156.

March 1961, Dr. EML Endeley in the SCHA suggested that “the best solution ... lies in the dissolution of the Southern Cameroons into compatible ethnic Groups according to their wishes [as expressed in the plebiscite results] and not on the dictates of majority clans”¹⁸

In response to Dr. EML Endeley’s bitter criticism of the plebiscite results, Foncha, in April 1961, retorted as follows: “It is now proof that the question of [re]unification had been... spontaneous We are again vindicating our stand to say that [re]unification had been a matter deeply buried in the minds” of Southern Cameroonians.” Foncha added that “we of the majority tribe [of the Bamenda Grassfield] will never kill some of us in order to reduce our number.... *The question of surrendering of power [to you] ---we want to make this abundantly clear that you [of the Forest Zone] cannot hold it anymore*” [Emphasis added].¹⁹ The interpretation and confirmation of the plebiscite results were the sole responsibility of the UN because it sanctioned, financed and organized the plebiscite. In April 1961, KNDP and CPNC delegations and other interested parties met at the UN in New York for the interpretation, confirmation and proclamation of the results.

Interpretation of Results: At the UN

The UN did not indicate the method of interpreting the results before the plebiscite. UN Resolution 1352 (XIV) did not make reference to the interpretation of the results by any stretch of the imagination; but conventional wisdom held that “the wishes of the people” would be the only determining factor. The interpretation and confirmation of the plebiscite results in British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons concerned the following principal political actors: the UN, Britain, the Republic of Cameroon, the Federation of Nigeria, Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons.

The UN Plebiscite Administrator, Dr. Djalal Abdoul of Iran, and his team were charged with the presentation of the results to the Trusteeship Council. The British delegation was led by Sir Andrew Cohen and it included Premier Foncha and Solomon T. Muna; the Nigerian delegation included Foreign Minister Jaja Nwanchuku and Alhadji Mohammed; the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon was headed by Foreign Minister Charles Okala and it included Dr. Eyidi Bebey, Minister of Justice Victor Kamga, Benôit Bindzi and Mayi Matip of the legal wing of the UPC; the CPNC (Opposition in Southern Cameroons) delegation was led by Dr. EML Endeley and

18 SCIS, B, “Statement by the Leader [Endeley] of the Opposition in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly, March 1961,” NAB.

19 *West Cameroon Press Release*, 2-3.

included NN Mbile, Barrister Samuel M.L. Endeley, EK Martin, Rev. Ando-Seh, Chief Sakwe Bokwe and FN Ajebe-Sone²⁰; Premier Foncha and ST Muna represented the KNDP; the OK was led by Ndeh Ntumazah; and, Albert Mukong and Gorji Dinka represented Southern Cameroons students associations.

The discussions in the Fourth Committee of the Trusteeship Council began on 13 April 1961 in essence and they were based on statements from the various delegations. The central argument of the CPNC was that the international boundaries relating to the Republic of Cameroon, Nigeria and the British Cameroons should be redrawn in order to unite divided ethnic units and clans based on the majority view of the ethnic units from the plebiscite results.²¹ In the view of the CPNC, the UN should use the ethnic groups and clans as constituted units; and, their "wishes," as freely expressed in the plebiscite results, should be respected. Chief Sakwe Bokwe of Dikome Balue of the CPNC, in addressing the UN while defending the party's position, spoke in Balue, one of the Oroko languages, with NN Mbile as the translator/interpreter.²²

The UK, as the Administering Authority, endorsed the results as the wishes of the people: Southern Cameroons to attain independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon and Northern Cameroons by joining the Federation of Nigeria. The Republic of Cameroon, through Charles Okala, criticized the organization and conduct of the elections in Northern Cameroons. He argued that the results of the plebiscite in Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons should be jointly counted and proclaimed as one. According to the Republic of Cameroon, there was only one trusteeship agreement on British Cameroons (Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons). The argument was countered by the fact that the administrative separation of Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons was gazetted in the Nigerian Official Gazette.²³ In addition, UN Resolution 1352 (XIII) of 16 October 1959 endorsed the organization and conduct of separate plebiscites in Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons as well as the separate termination of trusteeship.

20 Ethnic or tribal associations financed the trip of some members of the CPNC delegation. The *Molongo* of the Bakweri of Victoria Division sponsored EK Martin and Barrister Samuel M.L. Endeley; the *Mokanya* of the Orokos in Kumba Division (now in Ndian division) financed the trip of Chief Sakwe Bokwe of Dikome Balue; the *Muane-Ngoh* of the Bakossi sponsored FN Ajebe-Sone and the CPNC militants in Nkambe Division sponsored Rev. Ando-Seh

21 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 155-158.

22 The five official languages of the UN are: English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese.

23 Nyamndi, *Foreign Interest*, 115.

After heated discussions, the Trusteeship Council adopted the recommendation that the results be approved and sent to the UN General Assembly by a vote of 26 Yes; 6 No; and, 33 Abstentions. Charles Okala's argument that voters in Northern Cameroons went "to the polls at bayonet point" and that the votes were "seriously tainted with irregularities and Nigerians as well as non-Nigerian officials influenced the vote" was not judged as serious enough to invalidate the elections in Northern Cameroons.²⁴ Okala lambasted British officials in Nigeria and said that they "had prevented free choice in the Northern Territory and that local officials had worked directly to influence the plebiscite in favour of neighbouring Nigeria." Foreign Minister Okala further stated that British officials "had placed Nigerian interests first" and promoted "a spirit of submission and abandonment" to Nigeria in the territory. A visibly shaken Sir Andrew Cohen replied to Okala's diatribe in the following words:

The country which I represent has a feeling of warmest friendship towards the Republic of Cameroun. Whatever may be said here, in whatever language, I shall maintain this position of friendship towards the Cameroun Republic.... The Foreign Minister of Cameroun has made his judgments very hard. Indeed, had his words been made in other circumstances I would have asked for protection from [the] Chair.... These criticisms are unfair and quiet unjustified.... A plebiscite has been held in Northern Cameroons and in Southern Cameroons.... The statement just made was an attack in very strong language on the action and policy of my Government and country.... The people have made their wishes clear. One sector chose Nigeria. The other chose the Cameroun Republic²⁵

Foncha did not fully support the strong anti-British position of the Republic of Cameroon. He advised the Republic of Cameroon that it "should not cry over spilled milk" but Ahidjo disagreed with him. Earlier on 20 February 1961, Ahidjo had decried the British conduct of the elections in Northern Cameroons as a "clever propaganda that had been orchestrated with a wealth of surprising means by the enemies of reunification."²⁶ This came after a mob of about 50 Cameroonians attacked the British Embassy in Yaounde and tore up the Union Jack.²⁷ It was also reported by *La Presse du Cameroun* that there were riots in some areas in Southern Cameroons.²⁸

24 SCIS, B, "Britain Rejects Cameroon charges," *Press Release No. 1297*, 18th April 1961.

25 Ibid.

26 *Nouvelles du Cameroun*, 20 février 1961, Ahidjo, Press conference, FO 371/154689, TNA; see also Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 54.

27 British Embassy (Yaounde) to Foreign Office, 15 February 1961, CAB 21/5569, TNA.

28 *La Presse du Cameroun*, 15 février 1961.

Although, at the request of Okala, “all francophone countries ... [walked] out in protest [over the UN decision] and even the Republic of France walked out,”²⁹ they later on returned and the UN voted on a modified Afro-Asian draft resolution. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 64 Yes; 23 No; and, 10 Abstentions. The plebiscite results in Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons were subsequently approved. The Resolution, UN Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961, stated, amongst others, that:

1. ... the General Assembly, having examined the report of the United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner concerning the two plebiscites held in the Northern and the Southern Cameroons in February 1961 and the report of the Trusteeship Council thereon, ...
2. Endorses the results of the plebiscites that...
 - b) The people of the Southern Cameroons have similarly decided to *achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroon...* [Emphasis added]
3. Considers that, the people of the two parts of the Trust Territory having freely and secretly expressed their wishes with regard to their respective futures in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1352 (XIV) and 1473 (XIV), *the decision made by them through democratic processes under the supervision of the United Nations should be immediately implemented* [Emphasis added];
4. Decides that, the plebiscite having been taken separately with differing results, the trusteeship agreement of 13 December 1946 concerning the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration shall be terminated, in accordance with Article 76(b) of the Charter of the United Nations and in agreement with the administering authority, in the following manner:
5. Invites the Administering Authority, the Governments of the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon, to initiate urgent discussions with a view to finalizing, before 1 October 1961, the arrangements by which the agreed and declared policies of the parties concerned shall be implemented

In clear terms, the UN gave London, Buea and Yaounde the full responsibility of ensuring the smooth termination of British trusteeship administration in Southern Cameroons and the territory's independence “upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon.”

29 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 159.

Analyzing UN Resolution 1608 (XV)

In substance, UN Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961 was essentially the brainchild of the Afro-Asian bloc and more especially the African Group. The Republic of Cameroon, France and all the Francophone countries south of the Sahara voted against it. In a move to score political points to promote the Anglophone cause in Cameroon, some English-speaking Cameroonian political activists hammered on the vote against UN Resolution 1608 (XV) by the Republic of Cameroon. They argued that Yaounde was against the attainment of independence *per se* by Southern Cameroonians. This, of course, was not true because the Republic of Cameroon was against the interpretation of the plebiscite votes and the conduct of the election in Northern Cameroonians and not Southern Cameroonians independence *per se*.

The several meetings, official statements and communiqués by Ahidjo and Foncha between 1959 and April 1961 belied claims that Yaounde rejected the independence of Southern Cameroonians. For instance, the Joint Ahidjo-Foncha Declaration of 14 October 1960, the Ahidjo-Foncha communiqué of the meeting of 1-2 December 1960 (*The Two Alternatives*) and the *Note Verbale* of 16 December 1960 from the Yaounde Government to the British Government were irrefutable evidence that Yaounde supported the independence of Southern Cameroonians. The Republic of Cameroon did not reject the independence of Southern Cameroonians when it rejected the results and voted against UN Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961.

The Republic of Cameroon voted against the results in Northern Cameroonians and the method of separately proclaiming the results in Northern Cameroonians and Southern Cameroonians and, *ipso facto*, against Resolution 1608 (XV). This was because Yaounde wanted the *results* of Northern Cameroonians and Southern Cameroonians to be counted jointly and declared as a bloc. Yaounde argued that British Cameroonians was given to Britain to be administered first as a mandated territory of the League of Nations (1922-1946) and later as a UN Trust Territory (1946-1961); it was not split into British Northern Cameroonians and British Southern Cameroonians.

However, the UN insisted on counting the votes separately; and declaring them separately. The Yaounde Government was aware that if the results were calculated jointly as a bloc and declared as a bloc, both Northern Cameroonians and Southern Cameroonians would achieve independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon: in Southern Cameroonians, 233,571 voters voted for *reunification* and in Northern Cameroonians, 97,741 voted for *reunification* which gave a total of 331,312 votes. In Northern Cameroonians, 146,296 voters voted for *association* and in Southern Cameroonians, 97,659 voted for *association*

which gave a total of 243,955 votes. The refusal to count the votes and results jointly was a bitter pill for Ahidjo and his government to swallow.

It should be noted that Ahidjo was not an initial frontrunner in support of reunification. It was reported that Ahidjo had four choices regarding the question of reunification: his first choice was to lose both Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons; his second choice was to win Northern Cameroons and lose Southern Cameroons; his third choice was to win both Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons; and, his fourth choice was to win Southern Cameroons and lose Northern Cameroons.³⁰ The indigenous population of Northern Cameroons was similar, historically and culturally, to the indigenous population of the north of the Republic of Cameroon. Ahidjo wanted British Northern Cameroons to consolidate his political base in the Republic of Cameroon.

UN Resolution 1608 (XV) was also misinterpreted by some English-speaking Cameroonian (Anglophone) political activists who claimed that the Resolution accorded independence to Southern Cameroons. During the Anglophone Crisis (see chapters five and six), these activists demanded the *restoration* of Southern Cameroons independence which, they claimed, the territory achieved according to UN Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961 and the *Statutory Instruments, 1961, No. 977 West Africa: The Southern Cameroons (Constitution) (Amendment) Order-in-Council, 1961*.³¹ There is no doubt that Resolution 1608 (XV) explicitly stated that Southern Cameroons would achieve independence “upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon” on 1st October 1961. It is obvious, therefore, that based on UN Resolution 1352 (XIV) of 16 October 1959 and UN Resolution 1608 (XV), Southern Cameroons was granted independence because, through the plebiscite, the people expressed the wish to achieve independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon. As the UK Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Hugh Fraser, said in the House of Commons on 1st August 1961, “an overwhelming majority [of Southern Cameroons electorate voted] in favour of joining the Cameroun Republic...and...the people freely expressed their wishes about their future.”³²

30 Leland Barrows, “Oral History interview with William Moses,” USIA, Mclean, Virginia, 2 April 1971, cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, III.

31 Statutory Instruments, 1961, No. 977 West Africa: Southern Cameroons (Constitution) (Amendment) Order-in-Council, 1961, VC/a (1960) 18, NAB.

32 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_199610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

This point was vividly driven home in November 2020 in a letter from the UK West Africa Department, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to the Cameroon High Commissioner in London. In the letter, the UK West Africa Department wrote:

*The UK recognises the outcome of the 1961 referendum, organised by the United Nations, in which Southern Cameroons (the modern Anglophone regions) voted to join La Republique [République] du Cameroun. UNGA Resolution 1608 (XV) endorsed the result of the plebiscite in Southern Cameroons. We respect the territorial integrity of Cameroon [Emphasis added].*³³

The territory's independence was conditioned, unfortunately, upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon. The results of the plebiscite, as explained by Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Hugh Fraser in August 1961, meant granting independence to Southern Cameroons and at the same time creating a new political entity from the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons.³⁴

Southern Cameroons never achieved independence before negotiating for reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. It never had nor enjoyed the attributes of an independent sovereign country before 1st October 1961: a flag, a seal, a motto and a national anthem, amongst others. The reference to the *Southern Cameroons (Constitution) (Amendment) Order-in-Council* which was drafted on 26 May 1961 and went operational on 2 June 1961 did not abrogate the territory's status as a UN Trust Territory administered by Britain. Great Britain did not have the authority to terminate the UN trusteeship over Southern Cameroons without the mandate from the UN.

Unfortunately, the call for "the restoration of our independence" which was uncritically swallowed by a large section of the aggrieved and marginalized Anglophone population was what they wanted to hear regardless of its soundness and correctness. The million CFA francs question which the proponents of "the restoration of our independence" did not want to be asked was: "Who declared Southern Cameroons as a sovereign independent state and, where and when?" Although the political leaders of Southern Cameroons argued very bitterly on the interpretation and proclamation of the results, when the dust settled, they decided to agree to work together for the betterment of the population.

33 UK West Africa Department, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Ref. TO2020/22405, 12 November 2020.

34 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

Truce by Southern Cameroons Leaders

The Southern Cameroons leaders left Buea in March 1961 to attend the UN session on the interpretation and confirmation of the 11 February 1961 Plebiscite Results in two bitter opposing camps: the KNDP and the CPNC. The intense discussions and heated debates impacted on the UN members. The CPNC, although its arguments were defeated at the Trusteeship Council, was able to convince a vast majority of UN members to vote either "No" or "Abstain" on the acceptance of the results. In fact, the Trusteeship Council Recommendation requesting the General Assembly to accept the results was 26 Yes; 6 No; and, 33 Abstentions. It showed that the vast majority of UN members (39 members out of 65) were uncomfortable with the organization, the conduct of the plebiscite and the interpretation of the results. It was certainly a consoling defeat for the CPNC and not a good victory for the UK, the KNDP and the UN Plebiscite Organizing Committee.

After the heated discussions and the adoption of Resolution 1608 (XV), "reasoning" got the better part of "emotion" and the representatives of the KNDP and the CPNC met in one of the rooms at the UN in April 1961 and agreed on a truce. Both the KNDP and the CPNC called "on all our members to refrain from any provocative acts and utterances... forget the past and work together towards the achievement of a happy and prosperous Cameroon nation."³⁵ Later, after an extraordinary KNDP-CPNC meeting in Buea on 11 May 1961, Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley, once more, called on "all shades of opinion in Southern Cameroons ... [to] work towards the achievement of a happy and prosperous Kamerun nation ... and refrain from all provocative acts and utterances ... which could only go to make unity difficult..."³⁶ The next crucial step was to work out the modalities which would govern a reunified Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons *on the basis of a federation*.

To the Foumban Conference, July 1961

The UN General Assembly Resolution 1608 (XV) invited Britain, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons to urgently initiate discussions before 1st October 1961 on the implementation of reunification between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons. To that effect, several meetings and discussions were held between the Republic of Cameroon headed by President Ahidjo and Southern Cameroons led by Premier Foncha; and, trilateral meetings of the Republic of Cameroon, Southern

³⁵ Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 162.

³⁶ SCIS, B, "Meeting of Government and opposition Party Leaders," Communiqué No. 1, *Press Release No. 132*, 12th May 1961, NAB.

Cameroons and the UK. The trilateral discussions were held in May, June and August and the UK delegation was led by either Sir Roger Stevens³⁷ or Christopher Eastwood.

It was expected that the “truce” between the KNDP and the CPNC which was agreed to in New York “to forget the past and work together towards the achievement of a happy and prosperous Cameroon,” and which was re-affirmed in Buea on 11 May 1961, would provide for a healthy working relationship between the KNDP and the CPNC. Unfortunately, it was easier said than done. All the several bilateral and trilateral discussions by the Republic of Cameroon, Southern Cameroons and the UK to arrange for the implementation of *reunification* were held without the participation and/or input from the opposition CPNC, except for the Foumban Constitutional Conference of 17-21 July 1961. The two leaders, Ahidjo and Foncha, but more especially Foncha, conducted the discussions and negotiations as if *reunification* was exclusively restricted to the KNDP and the UC. The several meetings and discussions on the way forward regarding the implementation of *reunification* have been well documented and analyzed by several scholars of Cameroon political history and therefore it is needless to belabour the point again.³⁸

The first of a series of meetings of the UK, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons as requested by the UN in Resolution 1608 (XV) occurred less than a week after the 11 May 1961 re-affirmation of the KNDP-CPNC “truce;” yet, the CPNC was left out in the Southern Cameroons delegation. Before the Buea Tripartite Meeting of 15-17 May 1961, the British Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod; the Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons, JN Foncha; and, Commissioner JO Field of Southern Cameroons met in London to discuss the process of implementing the plebiscite results and “handing over the territory to the Cameroon Republic.”³⁹

While Foncha and Field were still in London with Macleod, Ndeh Ntumazah appealed for the moral support of the British Government. Ntumazah called for the:

37 Sir Roger Bentham Stevens (born in June 1906 and died in February 1980) was an academic, diplomat and official in the British Foreign Office (FO). He was a British ambassador to Persia from 1954-1958 and Deputy Under Secretary of State, FO, for the African Department. He was advisor to the First secretary of State on Central Africa from 1963-1970 and from 1972-1977, he was a member of the UN Administrative Tribunal.

38 See for instance, the excellent publication of Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 197-237; Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 163-173; Milne, *No Telephone*, 425-440; Ngoh, *Cameroon*, 229-236; Johnson, *the Cameroon Federation*, 169-173; Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 137-195; and, Abwa, *Cameroon*, 326-390.

39 SCIS, B, “Talks of Future of Cameroons,” *Press Release*, No. 1330, 11 May 1961.

- 1) Restoration of civil and political liberties so that all shades of political opinion may be heard;
- 2) Evacuation of foreign troops (French troops in the Republic of Cameroon and British troops in Southern Cameroons) from Cameroon soil;
- 3) Submission of a constitution drawn up for the unified Cameroon Republic to a referendum; and,
- 4) Formation of a caretaker government on a wide political basis charged with the duty of conducting elections to a constituent assembly composed of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons.⁴⁰

There is no doubt that the submission of a draft constitution of the unified Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons would have greatly reduced the politico-constitutional headache which emerged decades down the line. Unfortunately, the position of Ntumazah and the OK party was ignored.

After the London meeting, delegations of the UK, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons met in Buea for a Tripartite Meeting which ran from 15-17 May 1961. The Tripartite Meeting was aimed at charting a way forward for the implementation of UN Resolution 1608 (XV). The UK delegation was led by Sir Roger Stevens of the Foreign Office (FO); the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon was led by President Ahidjo; and, the Southern Cameroons delegation was led by Premier Foncha. The conference was chaired by Commissioner JO Field of Southern Cameroons. The meeting ran into four sessions and brought out several differences between the delegations. Foncha expressed several reservations on issues such as the "transfer of sovereignty," but most importantly on the arrangements for security in the new Federal Republic of Cameroon. The meeting closed "without being able to agree on a statement to the press."⁴¹

The second meeting was a bilateral meeting between the Republic of Cameroon led by Ahidjo and Southern Cameroons led by Foncha; it held in Yaounde from 22-24 May 1961. The meeting was to examine files on the various aspects of reunification but Foncha was not prepared for a detailed discussion on the files in Yaounde and "took with him the draft federal constitution prepared in Yaounde" by the Republic of Cameroon.⁴² Ahidjo and Foncha, however, agreed that a tripartite meeting would be held in Buea on 15 June; the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons would

40 Ibid.

41 Milne, *No Telephone*, 436.

42 Cited in Abwa, *Cameroun*, 380; our translation.

meet in Fouban on 10 July; and, another tripartite meeting was slated at the end of July.⁴³ It was at the meeting of 22-24 May 1961 that Ahidjo gave Foncha the draft federal constitution. The Buea Tripartite Meeting was held from 14-19 June and it was chaired by JO Field. The delegations were: the UK led by Sir Roger Stevens; the Republic of Cameroon led by President Ahidjo; and, the Southern Cameroons led by Premier Foncha. The main subjects discussed were the "Transfer of Sovereignty;" the "Drafting of a constitution; and, "Defence." Ahidjo and Foncha disagreed on the modality for the "Transfer of Sovereignty."

On the "Transfer of Sovereignty," Ahidjo proposed that the "sovereignty" of Southern Cameroons should be transferred to him (the Republic of Cameroon) on 1st October 1961. Foncha opposed Ahidjo's position and argued that "sovereignty" should be transferred to a federation which would have been created and not to the Republic of Cameroon. Foncha believed that a federation would have been created before 1st October 1961 between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons which, he thought, would have been independent before 1st October 1961. On the "Drafting of the Constitution," Ahidjo proposed that it should be done by direct negotiations between him (the Republic of Cameroon) and Foncha (Southern Cameroons). Ahidjo's position was supported by Sir Roger Stevens to the dismay of JO Field. The position of the British government squared very well with that of Ahidjo.

On 1st August 1961, the UK Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Hugh Fraser, said in the House of Commons that "The actual constitutional arrangements are essentially matters for the Cameroonians themselves."⁴⁴ According to Ahidjo, the drafting of the constitution was a Cameroonian affair. Foncha wanted a loose federal system while Ahidjo wanted a strongly centralized federal structure as a transitional measure to a unitary state. The delegations also disagreed on the question of "Defence and Security." Before the meeting ended, Ahidjo, in private, in the presence of ST Muna and Foreign Minister Charles Okala, once more, gave Foncha a copy of the constitutional proposals. The draft copy of the constitution was an amended version of the constitution of the Republic of Cameroon.

43 The meetings were held but not on the dates which were agreed to at the 22-24 May 1961 meeting in Yaounde. The Buea Tripartite Meeting was held from 14-19 June 1961; the Fouban Conference held from 17-21 July 1961; and the tripartite meeting which was scheduled for the end of July was held in Yaounde from 2-7 August 1961.

44 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

Although several issues were discussed, the report of the Buea Meeting of June 1961, according to Milne, read “more like a dossier of differences than an agreed solution to outstanding difficulties....”⁴⁵ On 23 June 1961, Foncha’s position on the “Transfer of Sovereignty” to a federation and not to the Republic of Cameroon was shattered when the UK Foreign Office informed Ahidjo and Foncha that the British government had decided on the following:

- i) Terminate its trusteeship on the Southern Cameroons on 1st October in conformity with UN Resolution 1608 (XV);
- ii) Not to support any proposal for its extension or any other arrangements than Southern Cameroons joining the Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961; and,
- iii) Give a “parting gift” of £500,000 to the Southern Cameroons as soon as the Federal Republic was operational.⁴⁶

Before the next meeting which was scheduled for Foumban, the Foncha government, the governing KNDP, other political leaders, traditional rulers and Native Authorities in Southern Cameroons agreed to hold a “Constitutional Conference” in Bamenda in order to “be aware of as many aspects as possible of responsible opinions before [the Government of Southern Cameroons] embarks on final consultation with the government of the Republic of Cameroon.”⁴⁷

Bamenda “All-Party” Constitutional Conference, 26-28 June 1961.

The conference was attended by the representatives of the KNDP led by Foncha; the CPNC led by NN Mbile; the OK led by Ndeh Ntumazah; the Fons and Chiefs; and, the Native Authorities. Dr. EML Endeley, the CPNC leader, did not attend because of ill-health and NN Mbile headed the CPNC delegation. The conference was to prepare Southern Cameroons delegates for the Foumban Conference and draft the constitution they would like to have for a reunified Cameroon *on the basis of a federation*. The conference ran from 26-28 June 1961.

Foncha, in his opening address, said that “the Republic of Cameroon had agreed that the joining will be by federation.”⁴⁸ He presented the KNDP’s July 1960 “United Cameroons

45 Milne, *No Telephone*, 436.

46 SCIS, B, *Press Release No. 434*, June 1961.

47 Bamenda “All-Party Constitutional Conference,” Vb/B/1961/1, File AOD/8/61, NAB.

48 SCIS, B, “Southern Cameroons All-Party Constitutional Conference Opens in Bamenda,” *Press Re-*

Federal Constitution” for discussion rather than the draft federal constitution which Ahidjo had given him privately on two occasions: at the Yaounde Meeting of 22-24 May 1961 and at the Buea Tripartite Meeting of 14-19 June 1961. The draft federal constitution was the April 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon which was amended in order to accommodate Southern Cameroons. Mbile explained that Ahidjo gave Foncha the draft federal constitution “for the expressed purpose of the draft constituting the basis of discussion” at the Bamenda “All-Party Constitutional Conference.”⁴⁹ It was, therefore, clear that, according to Ahidjo, the “draft federal constitution” was to be one of the main documents for discussions, if not the sole document.

According to Ndi, Foncha called the Bamenda “All-Party Conference” because he wanted to specifically “ensure that they [the Southern Cameroons delegates] went to Foumban speaking with one voice, which would also strengthen their position in the face of the East Cameroon delegation led by Ahidjo.”⁵⁰ However, the contrary happened at Foumban because, except of a few KNDP Ministers, the rest of the Southern Cameroons delegates were taken aback when they were presented with a draft federal constitution; a copy of which Foncha had received from Ahidjo but failed to table it for discussion at the Bamenda “All-Party” Conference. Foncha, by refusing to present the draft federal constitution, fuelled the allegations of secret deals between him and Ahidjo. Mbile, while promising at Bamenda that the CPNC would work with the KNDP, nonetheless, remarked that “nobody has ever been asked to give cooperation in the dark.”⁵¹ Ntumazah proposed that the Southern Cameroons constitutional proposals should be taken to Foumban and should include the maintenance of the “British system of justice and their rule of law” which should be preserved “in the constitution of a United Kamerun.”⁵²

The Bamenda “All-Party Conference” was not a KNDP conference and it was organized to enable the Southern Cameroons delegates to “be aware of as many aspects as possible of responsible opinions” on the constitution; and the draft federal constitution which Ahidjo gave Foncha was the “most responsible opinion.” At a time when the SCHA was equally split on the basis of 13:13 between the KNDP and the CPNC, and both political parties had reaffirmed their “truce” on 11 May 1961, it is hard to understand why Foncha did not table the draft federal constitution in Bamenda as the main document for discussion. Some Cameroon historians have attempted to explain that Foncha did

lease No. 414, 27th June 1961.

49 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 168.

50 Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 137.

51 *Cameroons Champion*, 4 July 1961.

52 SCIS, B, “Southern Cameroons All-Party,” *Press Release No. 414, 27th June 1961.*

not conceal or hide the draft proposal at the Bamenda “All-Party Conference” because he had discussed it with some of his cabinet Ministers before the Bamenda Conference.⁵³

There is no denying that Foncha discussed the “Ahidjo Draft Federal Constitution” with some close members of his cabinet. In a report dated 26 June 1961 from JO Field to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Iain McLeod, Field reported that “Foncha and his ministers have studied constitutional proposals left here by Ahidjo last Sunday and have, in consultation with Mr. Smith [the Attorney-General of Southern Cameroons] proposed counter proposals....”⁵⁴ Unfortunately, neither the “draft federal constitution” nor the “counter proposals” by “Foncha and his ministers” were tabled for discussion at the Bamenda Conference. This ignored the fact that the “All-Party Bamenda Conference” was convened in order to enable Southern Cameroons politicians prepare the territory’s constitutional proposals for the Fomuban Conference. The drawing up of a constitution for the country in a multiparty polity was not expected to be a one-party affair especially given the composition of the SCHA and neither was it expected to be the preserved prerogative of the governing political party.

It should be emphasized that Foncha’s presentation of the draft federal constitution to some of his Cabinet Ministers could not have replaced, and did not replace, its presentation and discussion at the Bamenda “All-Party Constitutional Conference. According to Muna who assisted Foncha at the conference, the latter “did not want [the Opposition] to derail” the constitutional process and, consequently, he did not present the “draft federal constitution” to the delegates.⁵⁵ Martin Z. Njeuma provides a pertinent explanation to Foncha’s decision in the following words:

The consequences of Endeley’s weak campaign showing [at the plebiscite] was that Foncha ... now felt confident to negotiate reunification, or the specifics of federation, with Ahidjo single-handed, without first seeking general consensus in his party, the KNDP, let alone amongst the population of West [Southern] Cameroon.⁵⁶

53 See, for instance, Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 82-83 and 141-144; Fanson, *Cameroon History*, 333-335.

54 Memo PROC CO554/2188XC 3406 of June 26, 1961 cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 212; see also Fanson, *Cameroon History*, 334.

55 Interview with S.T. Muna, Ngyen-Mbo, Mbengwi, Cameroon, 10 March 1990.

56 Cited in Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon*, 134.

Njeuma further explains Foncha's decision, contrary to Ndi's interpretation,⁵⁷ on the grounds that:

It was certainly not in Foncha's political interest to involve Endeley's party [the CPNC] closely in the process of federalizing the union between East and West Cameroon. Foncha feared that the Opposition in West Cameroon would put a wedge between him and Ahidjo. Accordingly, Foncha restricted the joint East and West Cameroon constitutional discussions to the two governing parties [the KNDP and the UC].⁵⁸

The refusal by Foncha to present the draft federal constitution to the delegates at the Bamenda "All-Party Conference" was in the interest of the KNDP and its leadership and not in the interest of Southern Cameroons. In defense of Foncha's decision, some Cameroon historians argued that Foncha did not table the "draft federal constitution" in Bamenda because "The [KNDP] party had a mandate in the 1959 elections and was responsible to the people and not to any other political party whose politicians had been rejected at the polls."⁵⁹ This argument failed to acknowledge that in 1961, the KNDP and the CPNC had 13 seats each in the SCHA.

There was, however, a lurking apprehension that Foncha had a soft spot for the reunification option and did everything to ensure the victory of *reunification* against *association*. Jacques Roger Booh-Booh explains Foncha's unflagging support for "reunification" on the grounds that Foncha's family originated from Nde Division in the West Region. As Booh-Booh stated:

I [Booh-Booh] was edified on this matter [of relations between the West and Northwest Regions] during an official visit to Liberia in 1968; Hon. Foncha...revealed to me that his family came from Nde Division. His *Aide de Camp*, Major Nana...was an indigene of Bamena in Nde Division, where his step-brother was a Minister in the Federal Republic of Cameroon.⁶⁰

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 George Atem, "The Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Cameroon Unification", *Cameroon Panorama*, No. 657, December 2012, 6.

60 Jacques Roger Booh-Booh, "Preface" in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, xv-xvi. Dr. Jacques Roger Booh-Booh was former Cameroon Minister of External Relations and former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Rwanda.

The delegates at the Bamenda "All-Party Constitutional Conference", at the end, produced constitutional proposals which were diametrically opposed to the draft federal constitution which Ahidjo had given Foncha.

The Southern Cameroons delegates, unknowingly, went to the Foumban Conference of 17-21 July 1961 psychologically and politically ill-prepared to "confront" what they were eventually presented with at Foumban. However, it should be underscored that the Bamenda "All-Party Conference" was held in an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion in spite of the "truce" between the KNDP and the CPNC. It was also no secret that though the OK supported the KNDP in the campaign for reunification, they were not the best of political allies. For instance, in a secret meeting of senior OK party officials after the OK's Bamenda Congress from 17-18 March 1961, the OK secretly discussed plans to overthrow the Foncha/KNDP government.

Ntumazah, in advancing the UPC vision of unitary re-unification, called for general elections before 1st October 1961 and a provisional government. He no longer felt that Foncha should continue as Premier.⁶¹ The failure of Foncha to apprise the Southern Cameroons delegates at the Bamenda "All-Party Conference" of Ahidjo's draft federal constitution set the stage for the one-sided pro-Republic of Cameroon federal constitution. The draft constitution which was discussed at Foumban, Yaounde and finally adopted in August 1961 by the National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon would subsequently affect West Cameroon (former Southern Cameroons) which today constitutes the present-day North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

Conclusion

The failure of Southern Cameroons politicians to arrive at a consensus on the political future of the territory led the UN to step in and the result was the plebiscite option with two alternative questions: independence by joining the Federation of Nigeria or independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon. The "Third Option" of independence as a separate political entity was a last-minute proposal which was rejected in October 1959 and again in November 1960. Although both the KNDP and the CPNC proposed the "Third Option" in November 1960, both political parties had concluded arrangements should their option win at the plebiscite. The CPNC was able to get Britain and Nigeria to agree on the constitutional position of Southern Cameroons within the Nigeria polity should *association* emerge victorious at the plebiscite.

61 Abwa, *Cameroun*, 381.

The plebiscite campaign was bitter and ethnicity was introduced into it as Dr. EML Endeley's statement in March 1961 in the SCHA and Foncha's reaction in April 1961 demonstrated. The terrorist activities launched by the UPC in the Republic of Cameroon and highlighted by the CPNC were less devastating, politically, than the Igbo animosity in Southern Cameroons. The Igbo animosity was well exploited by the KNDP to its advantage and it won handily. The KNDP's overwhelming victory was, however, contested by the CPNC which proposed that the results should be implemented according to the voting patterns of the clans and ethnic groups.

After heated debates at the UN which, at one time, saw the Republic of Cameroon walking out with France and some French-speaking African countries in protest against the interpretation of the plebiscite results, the UN finally voted to recognize and adopt the results. The results were recognised and proclaimed by the UN in its Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961. The UN, through Resolution 1608 (XV), "invited" the Administering Authority (the United Kingdom), the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons to effect measures and policies to implement its Resolution.

CRAFTING THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

Introduction

The source of the Anglophone Problem which degenerated into a crisis and subsequently into an armed conflict was the constitutional proposals which emerged from the Fouban Conference of July 1961. These proposals were put into a constitutional form at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks of August 1961. The armed conflict gave rise to grave political, humanitarian and socio-economic consequences. The failure of the Ahidjo and Biya governments to adequately implement the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon (1961-1972); that of the United Republic of Cameroon (1972-1984); and, the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon in relation to the peoples of the former Southern Cameroons, both in letter and spirit, plunged the country into the crisis.

It is imperative that a detailed analysis of the statements, speeches and actions by the key players should be made for a better understanding and appreciation of the root cause (s) of the Anglophone Problem and, by extension, the Anglophone Crisis. The Anglophone Crisis is also referred to as the socio-political crisis in the North West and South Regions of Cameroon. These statements, speeches and actions were made or taken principally by Ahidjo (Republic of Cameroon) and Foncha (Southern Cameroons) at the Fouban Conference and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks; and, with Christopher Eastwood (the United Kingdom) at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks. The detailed analysis would, of course, provide a better understanding of any proposed solution. It is within this background that analyses of the generous citations of the statements and speeches at the Fouban Constitutional Conference and at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks as well as a summary look at the constitution make up the core of this chapter.

Fouban Conference, 17-21 July 1961

The Fouban Conference was attended by delegates from the Republic of Cameroon led by President Ahidjo and Southern Cameroons led by Premier Foncha.¹ The Southern

¹ President Ahidjo led a 12-man delegation of the Republic of Cameroon comprising: Prime Minister Charles Assale; Foreign Minister Charles Okala, Minister of Territorial Affairs Arouna Njoya; Minister of Justice Mohamane Lamine; Secretary of State at the Presidency Tobie Kuoh; Secretary-Gen-

Cameroons delegates left for Foumban confident that they were well prepared given their long history and experience in constitution-making when Southern Cameroons was administered, for administrative convenience, by the UK as part of Nigeria after 1922. Most of the Southern Cameroons delegates were schooled in constitution-making during their association with Nigeria's constitutional conferences from 1953 to 1958: the 1953 London Lancaster House Conference; the 1954 Lagos Constitutional Conference; the 1957 London Constitutional Conference; and, the 1958 Resumed London Constitutional Conference.

Little did they know that they were very ill-prepared for the Foumban Conference unlike Ahidjo and the delegates of the Republic of Cameroon. A French confidential memorandum made it clear that Foncha should not be allowed to delay reunification nor should he consider himself as being equal to Ahidjo. The memorandum further stated that "the modalities of [re] unification laid in the exclusive competence of the ... [Government of the Republic of Cameroon]."² It was even rumoured that Ahidjo wanted "to 'tie the Southern Cameroons up' so tight that they [would] not even be able to kick."³ To make matters worse for the Southern Cameroons delegates, most of them had not seen the draft federal constitution and did not even know it existed. It was in this atmosphere that the Foumban Conference kicked-off on Monday, 17 July 1961.

The Conference began with Ahidjo's opening speech which clearly stated its *raison d'être*. Ahidjo set the tone of the conference when he said:

eral at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jean-Faustin Betayene; Secretary of State at the Presidency in-charge of Information Josue Tetang; Director of Cabinet Cheick Sissoko; Permanent Secretary of the National Defence Council Samuel Kame; Director of the European and African Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Rostand Mve; and, Director of the Asia, America, and International Organisations Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alfred Ngando-Black. Gabriel Tina Happi was the Chief of Protocol.

For the Southern Cameroons delegation, John Ngu Foncha led a 26-man delegation made up of the following: ST Muna, AN Jua, PM Kemcha, BG Smith, Dr. EML Endeley, NN Mbile, PN Motomby-Wolleta and Rev. Ando-Seh. The traditional rulers were the Fons of Bafut, Bali, Mankon and Nsaw. The Chiefs were Kimbongsi, Buh, Oben, Ebanja and Dipoko. The Southern Cameroons delegation also included Messrs Mbinkar, Fontem, Tamfu, Kini, Kome, Carr, George Belinga Mbaraga who replaced Ndeh Ntumazah who did not attend for security reasons and Albert Mukong. In attendance also from Southern Cameroons were Conference Secretary J. Dixon; Private Secretary to the Prime Minister ON Bokwe; Interpreter and Assistant Secretary Dr. Bernard Fonlon; Publicity Secretary Thomas Abanda; Secretary Mrs. E. Lima; Secretary Ms. Hawksworth; and Secretary Ms. Deacon. Emmanuel Mbwaye attended as the chief photographer of the Southern Cameroons government.

2 Cited in Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 60.

3 Ibid., 26-57.

In a question of this nature [building a future framework], there should neither be a victor nor vanquished, *for our mission is not to defend personal positions* but to make the best of our experience and our abilities to construct a re-unified Cameroon that shall be organized and prosperous.... You know that even before the referendum and since then *during our talks with Mr. Foncha we chose a federal framework. It was so because linguistic, administrative and economic differences do not permit us to envisage seriously and reasonably a state of the unitary and centralized type.* It was because a confederal system on the other hand, being too loose, would not favour the close coming together and the intimate connection we desire. *A federal structure, therefore, would be the only one which suits our particular situation ...* [Emphasis added].⁴

Foncha, in his address, agreed with Ahidjo's position on a "federal structure" and stressed on "the existence of the two cultures" stating:

We have therefore *proposed a form of government which will keep the two cultures in the areas where they now operate, and to blend them in the centre.* The centre is therefore deliberately given only very limited subjects, while the states are left to continue largely as they are now. The form of government is one thing, while [foreign] culture is another Our main task is therefore to produce a constitution for a federal form of government, *taking into consideration the peculiar circumstances in which we have found ourselvesthe drawing up of this constitution is a matter for Cameroonians themselves, and it will be foolish to look to anyone else for help* [Emphasis added].⁵

Ahidjo definitely knew the thought of Foncha since both of them worked closely on the joint Ahidjo-Foncha Communiqué of 14 October 1960 and the *Two Alternatives* of December 1960; but Dr. EML Endeley's CPNC and the other opposition parties were never invited nor associated to those discussions. The presentation of the draft federal constitution to the Southern Cameroons delegates "on that morning [of Monday, 17 July 1960]" did not leave Dr. EML Endeley indifferent and he addressed both issues squarely stating:

4 SCIS, B, "All-Party Fomuban Conference opens: President Ahidjo Advocates Federal Constitution," *Press Release No. 1467*, 20th July, 1961.

5 Ibid.

The making of a constitution ... was not the exclusive right of the Government of the day; all parties should contribute their share so that there could be associated with the decision taken [Dr. Endeley expressed regrets] that the document containing the draft revision of the Cameroun constitution had reached the delegates only that morning [Monday, 17 July 1961] ... [and that time be allowed] for its study and discussion by the delegates [He felt that] if conferences of this nature had been held earlier, no difficulty would have arisen about drawing up a suitable constitution for unification [Emphasis added].⁶

Ahidjo, in adjourning the meeting, agreed with Dr. EML Endeley that "time be allowed" the Southern Cameroons delegates to study the draft federal constitution. Most of the delegates from Southern Cameroons "were dismayed to be given copies of Ahidjo's proposals and to discover that they differed very considerably from suggestions they themselves had made at the Bamenda conference."⁷

Ahidjo went on to add that the people of the Republic of Cameroon would have the opportunity to examine the draft constitution. No such commitment, however, was made for the people of Southern Cameroons by either Ahidjo or Foncha. The Southern Cameroons delegation examined the draft federal proposals from the afternoon of Monday, 17 July 1961 to the night of Thursday, 20 July 1961. The English version of the proposals/recommendations to the draft federal constitution which the Southern Cameroons delegates produced was translated into French; and, it was given to the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon "so that on Friday morning of July 21st, our views were ready" for their attention.⁸ It was obvious that the skeleton of the federal constitution had been agreed to between Ahidjo and Foncha and although it was *on the basis of a federation*, the failure of Foncha to discuss the draft federal constitution in Bamenda was aimed at defending "personal positions." The overall substance of the "draft" was to defend Ahidjo's "personal position" and that of the Republic of Cameroon. Both Ahidjo and Foncha were on the same page, so to speak, having agreed that reunification would be *on the basis of a federation* but, the taste of the pudding was in the eating. This was because the phrase "on the basis of a federation" was vague.

Although a federal system, federation, was the best system of government because of the different systems of administration, laws and foreign-derived languages and culture, there was no firm and definite commitment by Ahidjo and the Republic of

6 Ibid.

7 Fanso, *Cameroon History*, 334.

8 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 170.

Cameroon that the federal system was sacrosanct.⁹ This is because “federation” was regarded as a transitory federal system to a unitary system. On 1st August 1961, GM Thomson informed the British House of Commons that there were voices in the Republic of Cameroon which articulated that after 1st October 1961, “*on va saisir le Cameroun [Cameroun] du sud.*”¹⁰ Foncha failed to take cognizance of the fact that in spite of the experience Southern Cameroons delegates had acquired during Nigeria’s constitution-making processes, Southern Cameroons delegation needed the opinion of legal experts and advisers on constitutional matters.

The newly created Southern Cameroons Bar Association (SCBA)¹¹ had indicated its willingness to assist the Southern Cameroons government in its negotiations on *reunification* with the Republic of Cameroon. Foncha’s dismissal of foreign help saying that the drawing up of the constitution was solely a Cameroonian affair was exactly what Ahidjo told delegates at the Buea Tripartite Discussion of 14-19 June 1961. At that occasion, only JO Field expressed a contrary view but Sir Roger Stevens of the UK delegation and Foncha of the Southern Cameroons delegation supported Ahidjo; at best, they were mute. But at Foumban, Foncha went a step further by saying that it would be “foolish to look to anyone else for help” at a time when Ahidjo and the Republic of Cameroon had the full and solid backing of the French. Ahidjo counted on, and received, the counsel of French advisers who acted behind-the-scene throughout his several meetings and negotiations with Foncha and Southern Cameroonians.¹² These meetings included the Buea Tripartite Meeting, the Foumban Conference and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks.

The Southern Cameroons delegates were gravely disappointed that they had wasted time in Bamenda. According to Fon Angwafo III¹³ who attended both the Bamenda

9 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S55CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499(accessed 18 June 2020).

10 Ibid. The sentence in French can be translated as: “We are going to seize Southern Cameroons.”

11 The Southern Cameroons Bar Association was officially created on 6 July 1961. Barrister BG Smith, the Attorney-General was the President, Samuel ML Endeley was the Vice-President, and Emmanuel T. Egbe was the Secretary/Treasurer while Bamela Engo, Alakija and Kabeinje were General Members.

12 Deltombe, *La guerre du Cameroun*, 134.

13 Solomon Anyeghamo Ndefru (Fon Angwafo III) was born in May 1925 and died on 21 May 2022 at the age of 97 years. He attended primary schools in Bamenda and proceeded to the Aggrey Memorial College in Eastern Nigeria from 1945 to 1950. After Aggrey Memorial College, he was admitted into the University College Ibadan, Nigeria, and graduated with a Diploma in Agriculture in 1953. In April 1959, he became the 20th Fon of Mankon. In the December 1961 elections into the West Cameroon House of Assembly, he ran and won as an Independent candidate (45.6%)

“All-Party Conference” and the Fouban Conference, Foncha and Jua quarreled at Fouban because of the manner with which Foncha handled the Bamenda proposals.¹⁴ According to NN Mbile, Foncha, “having lost time in not showing us [the Southern Cameroons delegation at Bamenda] the East proposals ... treating them as a ‘secret’ document, now felt he had displeased his Eastern friends, and therefore stood for swallowing the proposals hook, line and sinker.”¹⁵ Jua, in Mbile’s words, lamented that he had never seen where a constitution was drafted in two days.¹⁶ As Mbile rightly explained, “The East Cameroon proposals were poles away from our ideas in Mankon. While we had gone for a loose federation with great deal of powers,” the proposals from the Republic of Cameroon “were completely the other way round.”¹⁷

It was not smooth-sailing in Fouban as the Southern Cameroons delegation toiled, quarreled and argued amongst themselves as they ploughed through the “draft federal proposals” while the delegates of the Republic of Cameroon idled away most of the time.¹⁸ It was not certain that the Southern Cameroons delegates would complete the scrutiny of the “draft proposals” within the time frame which was accorded to them. At one point, it was reported that the Southern Cameroons delegation estimated that “three weeks will be necessary to produce the constitution which will govern the federation ... [for] a serious study and detailed examination is necessary.”¹⁹

It was believed that Ahidjo was also of the opinion that “the conference be adjourned to an ulterior date, which will permit both delegations to return to Yaounde [for the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon] and Buea [for the Southern Cameroons

from Lower Ngemba defeating Daniel A. Nangah of the KNDP (26.6%); Chibikom of the OK (24.6%) and A.K. Ndikum (3.2%), another Independent candidate. He was a fervent political opponent of the KNDP and the Social Democratic Front (SDF). He never faltered in his militancy with the Cameroon Nation Union (CNU) party and the Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPDM). In 1990, he became the First Vice-President of the CPDM and served the party in that capacity until his death in May 2022. He was against the secessionist movement in the North West and South West Regions while recognizing that Anglophones had some genuine grievances. He stood for a united Cameroon. Unlike most of the Fons/Chiefs in the North West and South West Regions who escaped to Douala, Kribi or Yaounde during the armed conflict in the two regions from 2016 to 2022 when Fon Angwafo died, the late Fon stayed in his palace in Mankon until his death.

14 Interview with Fon Angwafo III, “Cameroon Calling,” CRTV, Yaounde, Sunday, 14 May 2017.

15 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 169.

16 Ibid., 169-170.

17 Ibid., 169.

18 Ibid., 170.

19 *Agence Camerounais de Presse (ACAP) Bulletin*, 21 juillet 1961.

delegation] to examine, with a clear head, the respective counter proposals....”²⁰ This was also the opinion of *L’Effort Camerounais*.²¹ On Thursday night, 20 July 1961, in spite of Jua’s apprehension that he had never seen where a constitution was drawn up in two days, the Southern Cameroons delegation, nonetheless, submitted what they had as comments and suggestions on the “draft proposals” after three session meetings.

Southern Cameroons Comments/Suggestions on the “Draft Federal Proposals”

The failure of Southern Cameroons politicians to examine the Ahidjo “draft federal proposals” at the Bamenda “All-Party Conference” was an enormous disadvantage to them. This was in spite of all the tons of goodwill they displayed at Foumban to produce a “document” to make *reunification* succeed. As Dr. EML Endeley said to Ahidjo in his remarks during the closing session on Friday, 21 July 1961, “we have succeeded in working as a team in *looking through the proposals which were placed by your government before the Southern Cameroons Delegation*” [Emphasis added].²² The Southern Cameroons delegation only looked through the “proposals” and did not have the luxury of discussing or debating with the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon on subjects which needed explanation.

Before Dr. EML Endeley’s statement, Foncha had earlier, in the same closing session, said:

For three days we sat over the papers Your Excellency presented to us. We looked into all the clauses and *found many things quite agreeable to us and some, though agreeable, needed some little suggestions from us, and we did so. We had heated debate on some of the points...* [because] we wished to produce the best for our country [Emphasis added].²³

Foncha was no stranger to the “proposals” given that he had received, from Ahidjo, copies of the “proposals” in May and June 1961. The Southern Cameroons delegation presented their “suggestions,” “comments,” which Foncha referred to as “recommendations.” In summary, the recommendations included:

The seat of government should be Douala;
The flag, motto and anthem should be considered by a special committee;
The ballot should be secret and all citizens of 21 years or over should have equal voting rights;

20 Ibid.

21 *L’Effort Camerounais*, 30 juillet 1961.

22 SCIS, B, “All-Party Foumban Conference.”

23 Ibid.

The words "The Federal Assembly" in Article 4 should be deleted and substituted with "The federal Legislature consisting of a Federal Legislative Assembly and a Federal Senate";

The Higher Education should be a state subject but "National University" should be a federal subject;

The word "indivisible" should be deleted from the constitution;

The President should be the Executive head of government and he should act with the advice of his Ministers except in a limited number of cases where he would have reserve powers; the President should be nominated by any person qualified to nominate him:

- 1) The President and the Vice President should be nominated at that same time and they should be from different states;
- 2) The President and Vice President should be nominated by universal adult suffrage;
- 3) The general opinion was that the President should be re-elected once only and election should be decided by a simple majority. It was, however, felt that this was a matter which could best be left to an Electoral Commission;
- 4) The federal Legislature should consist of: the National Assembly (the Lower House); the composition of which should be elected by universal adult suffrage, by secret ballot, from single member constituencies;

The Senate (Upper House) should consist of an equal number of senators from each State nominated by the State Government; the minimum age should be 40 years. The senate should have a delaying veto only and might not initiate money bills; the Legislative powers in the Federated States should be exercised for Southern Cameroons by a House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs and in the Republic of Cameroon by a Legislative Assembly; each Legislative Assembly should be elected for a term of five years; and citizens of the federation should have dual nationality- for instance,

citizenship of Southern Cameroons and also citizenship of federal Cameroon.²⁴

These suggestions were aimed at forging a very loose federation, closer to a confederation.

Premier Foncha and Dr. EML Endeley recommended that the suggestions from the Southern Cameroons delegation should be accepted. Foncha assured Ahidjo and the *Union Camerounaise* (UC) party that the suggestions were "not far from being perfect" if they were seriously considered and accepted.²⁵ In a similar vein, Dr. EML Endeley told Ahidjo and his delegation that the degree of acceptance of reunification

24 Fouban Conference 17 July-21 July 1961, Vc/b (1961)2, File No. [None: Dr. No. 194], NAB.

25 SCIS, B, "All-Party Fouban Conference."

by Southern Cameroonians depended on the attitude of the people of the Republic of Cameroon and "the manner in which they treat these proposals." Dr. EML Endeley acknowledged the success of the conference and hoped that "all other conferences after this will succeed."²⁶ Ahidjo received the suggestions with appreciation. He accepted those which did not fundamentally alter his wish for a centralized federation and agreed "to put into appropriate legal form the observations retained--a task which we propose to undertake as we return to Yaounde, and in which the Prime Minister and his colleagues will participate at the end of the month."

President Ahidjo and the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon reacted to the suggestions from the Southern Cameroons delegation. Speaking on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon, Ahidjo stated:

The principal amendments which you proposed to the draft can be classified in two categories – those which concern questions of detail on which I do not think it necessary to insist, and those which concern questions of principle.

With regard to the latter, the Cameroun Republic delegation is in agreement with the greater part of your views.

1. They agree that an Article of the constitution should indicate our adhesion to the United Nations Charter and to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. They esteem this reference to be largely sufficient.
2. In order to avoid a certain confusion that might arise from the word "INDIVISIBLE" we admit that it should be purely and simply omitted.
3. With regard to nationality, we are of the opinion that the federal republic can give but one nationality to its citizens, and on this condition the subjects of the Federated states are citizens of the federal republic and possess Cameroons nationality.
4. In constitutional practice, a federal law lays down the conditions for the exercise of the vote, the organization of elections, and whatever has a bearing on them. The Cameroun Republic Delegation adopts the greater part of the observation which has been formulated on this subject and proposes, when the time comes, to take them seriously into account, within the federal framework.
5. The bi-cameral system in a federation is, without doubt, classic; our delegation is, however, of the opinion that in the immediate future it is necessary to lighten as much as possible our parliamentary apparatus in relation to the resources that we have at our disposal, in order to make it as effective as possible.

26 Ibid.

6. The Cameroun Republic Delegation accepts the proposal of the Southern Cameroons Delegation that the President of the Federal Republic and the Vice-President should be elected by universal adult suffrage after the transitional period, and that both should not be subjects of the same State.
7. As regards the transitional period, we agree with the Delegation of the Southern Cameroons:
 - a) That the President of the Republic of Cameroun should, during his present term of office, be the President of the Federal Republic;
 - b) That the Premier of the Southern Cameroons should exercise the functions of Vice-President.

As the exercise of Federal Government competencies shall fall to the President of the Republic from 1st October, 1961, he shall nominate Federal Ministers from the subjects of the two States.

The Cameroun Republic Delegation proposes the election by the local Assemblies of a provisional Federal Assembly. The members of the definitive Federal Legislative Assembly could be elected by universal suffrage after April, 1963, as proposed by you. The Cameroun Republic Delegation agrees that Southern Cameroons should keep a House of Chiefs, and does not see any objection to this provision being inserted in the body of the Constitution. They also agree that the number of Deputies in the Legislative Assembly of this territory be increased to 37.

Our Delegation accepts the amendments proposed at the beginning of Article 45 as regards the transmission of laws voted by Parliament to the President of the Federal Republic.²⁷

At the end of Ahidjo's closing remarks, all the delegates rose in union and sang the national anthem of the Republic of Cameroon. One wonders what the Southern Cameroons delegates sang when their French-speaking colleagues were singing "their" national anthem which was in French. It was clearly stated and understood that another conference or meeting would be held to put the Founban proposals into legal constitutional format and language. It was believed within the Southern Cameroons legal community that having been sidelined from the Founban Conference, the Southern Cameroons Bar Association would be invited to the crucial legal exercise at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks. This, as it turned out, was wishful thinking. The Founban Conference presented very difficult and complex problems for Cameroonians, both of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons. Ahidjo, with French backing and

27 Ibid.

aided by the Cold War mentality which dominated the international arena, emerged as being “indispensable [for] the survival of the Cameroonian entity.”²⁸

Meanwhile, in Southern Cameroons, in the words of Torrent, the “elite were torn by stark antagonism” between the population of the forest zone and the Bamenda grassfield of Southern Cameroons (present-day North West and South West Regions); and, antagonism within the Foncha government which aided Ahidjo in achieving his goals.²⁹ After the Foumban Conference, the Opposition CPNC party was never invited to any negotiation or meeting between Ahidjo (Republic of Cameroon) and Foncha (Southern Cameroons) although the SCHA was equally divided: 13 MPs for the KNDP and 13 for the CPNC. This was very hard to comprehend especially given Dr. EML Endeley’s pledge to Ahidjo and the two delegations at Foumban that the CPNC was determined to be at the service of Ahidjo, and by extension reunification, “any time you wish, any time you think necessary for the betterment of the Southern Cameroons.”³⁰

Southern Cameroons Gave Away Equal Status

One of the unsolicited fallouts from the Foumban Conference was that Southern Cameroons delegates inadvertently failed to stand up to Ahidjo and the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon as equals. The Foumban Conference exposed the acute unpreparedness of the Southern Cameroons delegation because, as it turned out, they behaved like candidates for an examination who had prepared by reading the wrong text. The Southern Cameroons delegation was compelled to rely exclusively on the proposals of the Republic of Cameroon. This was explicitly stated by Dr. EML Endeley in his closing remarks on Friday, 21 July 1961, when he opined that the Southern Cameroons delegation had succeeded “in looking through the proposals which were placed by ... [the Ahidjo] Government before the Southern Cameroons Delegation.”³¹

28 Torrent, *Diplomacy and Nation-Building*, 57.

29 Ibid. The political divisiveness between the Southern Cameroons population of the forest zone and that of the Bamenda grassfield was planted in 1955 when Foncha and Jua bolted away from the KNC and created the KNDP. Later, the KNDP was viewed as a pro- Bamenda grassfield party and its political goal was supported by the OK following its creation in 1957. The KNC and the KPP were viewed as pro-forest zone political parties. The victory of the KNDP in the 1959 general elections brought to the fore the political antagonism between the forest zone and the Bamenda grassfield. The antagonism was accentuated by the plebiscite campaign and results as was demonstrated by Dr. EML Endeley’s Speech in the SCHA in March 1961 and that of Foncha in April 1961 in the same SCHA. Within the Foncha government, it was an open secret that Jua was not a convinced and dedicated reunificationist unlike Foncha.

30 SCIS, B, “All-Party Foumban Conference.”

31 Ibid.

The delegates were unable to present their Bamenda "All-Party Conference" proposals to Ahidjo and the delegation of the Republic of Cameroon for a final draft to be crafted from both "proposals."

The Southern Cameroons delegation, as expressed by Dr. EML Endeley, in re-affirming "some of the things which ... [Foncha] said," went on to plead that "*All we request is that you [President Ahidjo] should receive our proposals as an indication of our good intentions ... for a union*" [Emphasis added].³² As if that was not enough, Southern Cameroons was presented as "a young brother" in relation to "an elder brother." The Republic of Cameroon was the "elder brother", and Southern Cameroons was the "younger brother" who was "anxious to live with an elder brother."³³

In effect, Southern Cameroons, intentionally or not, made a mockery of the argument that the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons were equal and negotiated as equal partners. In January 1960, Foncha gave Ahidjo and the Republic of Cameroon "the option to forge diplomatic relations" which involved Southern Cameroons. Foncha went on to add that "knowing what we are looking for, [we] would advise that we be consulted...." At Foumban, the Southern Cameroons delegation was very grateful for Ahidjo's magnanimity in allowing Southern Cameroons to "look through" the proposals from the Republic of Cameroon.

The atmosphere and grandeur which Ahidjo projected around him at Foumban cowed the Southern Cameroons delegation and contributed to their submissiveness: "elder brother" and "young brother" complex. In the words of NN Mbile:

The atmosphere everywhere from the moment we landed in Foumban to the hour of our departure was dominated by one major feature, President Ahidjo's presence. The tremendous trappings surrounding the President, the huge entourage of top civil servants, the presidential sounds, the heavy and tight security, the army which had to make its presence felt wherever the head of state was... reduced the actual conference to a diminutive anti-climax.³⁴

NN Mbile's description of the political atmosphere in Foumban during the conference was aptly corroborated by Albert Mukong, one of the two OK delegates; the other OK

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid. In an African family, most parents hardly give "equal status" to "an elder brother" and "a younger brother."

34 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 167.

delegate was George Mbaraga.

Mukong, starkly and bluntly, described the atmosphere as follows: "...even from this time the Anglophone leaders were already gripped with fear. The fact that Ahidjo had the backing of the French and the French military might lay at his disposal. This fact greatly weakened Dr. Foncha and his men."³⁵ The Southern Cameroons strong delegation of 25 members (excluding the dozen secretariat/technical staff) was not united for it comprised the opposition CPNC, traditional rulers, the OK and even within the ruling KNDP, there was lack of unanimous political unity. The fear that gripped some of the Southern Cameroons delegates prevented them from addressing key constitutional worries and this annoyed Mukong and Mbaraga. The two OK delegates decided, at one point, to walk out of the working session and return to Buea. But, the timely intervention of Fon Achirimbi II of Bafut and Fon Galega II of Bali convinced them to stay and contribute to the discussions on the draft federal constitution.

There is no denying that Southern Cameroons was at the begging end. In referring to Southern Cameroons as "a young brother"; in not presenting the Bamenda "All-Party Conference" proposals at Foumban; and, in pleading with Ahidjo to receive the Southern Cameroons comments/proposals from the Republic of Cameroon, Foncha and Southern Cameroons gave Ahidjo and the Republic of Cameroon a victory in the psycho-political war from which they never recovered. The seeds of the Anglophone Problem were sowed and the emptiness of the concept of "equality of status" was laid bare. This point was eloquently driven home by Ahidjo in his closing remarks at Foumban when he said:

I am very happy to be able to collate our different points of view that we have put forward during these few days.... *After we had expressed our desire to reunite*, the United Nations decided to organise a plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons to see whether these wishes were really genuine...the vast majority of the electorate [in Southern Cameroons] responded clearly in the affirmative....*It became incumbent on the Republic of Cameroon, which already enjoyed international sovereignty and which possessed its own institutions, to revise its Constitution in order to form a union with the brother territory of the Southern Cameroons*[Emphasis added].³⁶

It is important to keep in mind Ahidjo's statement to the effect that "it became incumbent on the Republic of Cameroon... to revise its Constitution in order to form a union...."

35 Albert W. Mukong, *Prisoner without a Crime* (London: Edition Nubia), 26.

36 SCIS, B, "All-Party Foumban Conference."

The Southern Cameroons delegation and Southern Cameroonians in general, failed to read the subtle ominous message conveyed by Ahidjo.

The apparent successful ending of the Foumban Conference concealed deep misgivings harboured by some key stakeholders like the British. It was believed, within British circles, that the British government and people would be blamed should Southern Cameroons attainment of independence “by joining” go wrong. Some members of the British opposition felt that the British government “should have fought much harder than they did at the United Nations... for a third choice being offered to the peoples of the Southern Cameroons when the plebiscite took place.”³⁷ In July 1961, after the Foumban Conference, the march towards Southern Cameroons independence “by joining” the Republic of Cameroon was confronted with the problems of the form of government, security, and administration.³⁸

The question of “The Form of Government” was the most difficult problem that the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons had to deal with. Ahidjo and Foncha had agreed that “joining” would be “on the basis of a federation.” But, was it a loose federation or a centralized federation? And, as it has been pointed out earlier, no firm agreement as to the type of *federation* had been hammered out in black and white. The various “Talks” that led to the Foumban Conference did not settle the problem and the Conference did not produce an adopted constitution but rather the framework or skeleton of a draft federal constitution. The second problem was that of “Security.” It involved the security of British citizens as well as British protected persons in Southern Cameroons and the security of the population of Southern Cameroons. The security situation was accentuated by discussions on the British plan to station a naval vessel in the ocean in Victoria Division for a period after 1st October 1961.

In addition, the British withdrawal of their interests in Southern Cameroons and the decision by the Nigerian government to also withdraw her federal interests in the territory after 30 September 1961 alarmed the Southern Cameroons population and the British; and, this highlighted the security concerns. Furthermore, the British authorities issued weapons licences to “senior staff of commercial firms to enable them to defend their own estates.” This also involved the maintenance of law and order in Southern Cameroons. From the “Administrative” point of view, it was no secret that the

37 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

38 Ibid. The discussion on the problems of form of government, security and administration is based on the cited source.

Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons practiced two very different systems of administration. It was, therefore, important that the administrative machine in both territories should be discussed and resolved. These were some of the main problems which confronted the delegations of the UK, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons in Yaounde during the Tripartite Talks.

Yaounde Tripartite Talks, 2-7 August 1961

Ahidjo, at Foumban, promised the delegations of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons that the constitutional proposals would be put “into appropriate legal form” at a meeting “in which Prime Minister [Foncha] and his colleagues” would participate; this was the Yaounde Tripartite Talks of 2-7 August 1961. Unfortunately, despite President Ahidjo’s promise on 21 July 1961 that the next meeting would include “Prime Minister [Foncha] and his colleagues,” the Foncha government decided to limit the “Prime Minister and his colleagues” to KNDP colleagues only.

He left out the CPNC, the OK and the Natural (Traditional) Rulers who had attended the Foumban Conference.³⁹ He also left out the SCBA. The spirit and letter of the “truce” between the KNDP and the CPNC and Dr. EML Endeley’s statement that he was in Foumban to “set an example ... that by working together [with Foncha] we can make a better country,”⁴⁰ were rendered illusory by Foncha and the KNDP. Hon. FN Ajebe-Sone of the CPNC felt that the exclusion of the CPNC from the Yaounde Tripartite Talks was “a betrayal of trust.”⁴¹

In addition, Ahidjo’s firm commitment at Foumban that the proposals would be put “into appropriate legal form” was not enough to convince Foncha to invite the SCBA as a member of the technical team; an exclusion which the Attorney-General, BG Smith, later regretted. As BG Smith stated during a debate in the SCHA on 13 September 1961:

39 The Southern Cameroons delegation comprised Premier Foncha, ST Muna, AN Jua and P.M. Kemcha. The Southern Cameroons Technical Team consisted of: BG Smith (Attorney-General), JA Kisob (Secretary to the Prime Minister), Dr. Bernard N. Fonlon (Interpreter), Thomas Abanda (Publicity Officer), Mrs. E. Lima (Secretary/Typist), Miss Hawksworth (Secretary/Typist), Constable Lawrence (Orderly), Tamajong Ndumu (Director of Public Works) and Emmanuel Mbwaye (Photographer). The delegation of the Republic of Cameroon comprised President Ahidjo, Prime Minister Charles Assalé, Foreign Minister Charles Okala, Minister of Justice Mohaman Lamine and Secretary-General at the Presidency Christian Tobie Kuoh.

40 SCIS, B, “All-Party Foumban Conference.”

41 *West Cameroon House of Assembly Debates: Official Report* (Buea: Government Press, 1961), 92.

[It was] *our desire that problems connected with the chapter on judicature and the courts be referred [to the SCBA], and brought back to us for blue-penciling ... this was never done, and to my knowledge the next thing we saw was what is being termed the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, including those aspects to which we wanted to give second thought [Emphasis added].*⁴²

Although it is generally held that the Yaounde Tripartite Talks ran from 2-7 August 1961, the Tripartite Talks actually held from 5-7 August; from 2-4 August 1961, the delegations of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons held a series of meetings, excluding the UK delegation, and agreed on the final draft constitution. Ahidjo (in Buea in June 1961) and Foncha (in Foumban in July 1961) said, in effect, that the making of the constitution was a Cameroonian affair. The 2-4 August 1961 series of meetings between the delegations of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons, which have been termed "Inter-Cameroonian Dialogue" by some scholars,⁴³ did not produce a Joint Communiqué. At the Yaounde Tripartite Talks *per se*, which ran from 5-7 August, Ahidjo informed the UK delegation that the delegations of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons had agreed on a federal constitution; and, the UK delegation took note that the two delegations had agreed on a federal constitution.

On 5 August 1961, the UK delegation⁴⁴ led by Christopher Eastwood joined the delegations of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks proper began. Ahidjo succeeded in presenting the delegations of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons as essentially one delegation as they emerged from the 2-4 August "Dialogue." At the Tripartite Talks, Ahidjo and Eastwood dominated the discussions; Foncha only spoke lengthily on the subject of Customs and Ports Services in Southern Cameroons. The delegates at the Tripartite Talks addressed the following subjects:

1. Cameroonians at Present Serving in the Nigerian Army and Police Forces;
2. Federal subjects now under the control of His Honour the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons;

42 Ibid.

43 See for example, Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 239-241.

44 The UK delegation comprised the following: Christopher Eastwood (Assistant Under-Secretary of state at the Colonial Office), Ewart-Biggs (Foreign Officer), JO Field (Commissioner for Southern Cameroons), ADH Paterson (Financial Secretary for Southern Cameroons), Lt-Colonel DW Fraser (Commander of the Grenadier Guards) and CE King (UK Ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon).

3. Civil Service Expatriates;
4. Nigerian Currency as Legal Tender;
5. National Defense and Security; and,
6. Transfer of Sovereignty.

The three delegations examined the six subjects on Saturday, 5 August and Monday, 7 August. In addition to the six subjects, Eastwood presented "The Position of the Cameroons Development Corporation."⁴⁵

1. Cameroonians at Present Serving in the Nigerian Army and Police Forces

On this item, Eastwood explained that Nigeria was prepared to pay a proportionate gratuity to Southern Cameroonian soldiers to which they were entitled. He added that the Nigerian Government was prepared "to release any Cameroonian serving in the [Nigerian] Army, provided that an early indication [was] given of the terms of service to be offered by the new Federation." With regard to the Police Force, Premier Foncha said that about 99% of Cameroonian Police in the Nigerian Police Force were willing to be transferred to the newly created Southern Cameroons Police Force. According to Eastwood, there were about 600 Cameroonians in the Nigerian Police Force. The problem of the pensions of Cameroonians in the Nigerian Police Force was also raised. In the end, on the subject of Cameroonians in the Nigerian Armed Forces and Police, it was agreed that a mission would be sent to Lagos on the matter and Cameroonian soldiers would be contacted in order to ascertain their wishes.

2. Federal Subjects now under the control of His Honour the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons

A distinction was made between "internal" and "federal" services in Southern Cameroons. The "federal services" were federal subjects which were under the control of the Commissioner of Southern Cameroons, representing the Administering Authority, since October 1960. Most of the "federal services," it was agreed, would be federal in the new federation of Cameroon and they were expected to be handed over to the future federation. The rest of the services considered as "internal services" would

⁴⁵ Except otherwise stated, for discussion on the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, 2-7 August 1961, I have drawn generously from: Secret: Third Session of the Tripartite Discussions held in Yaounde on the 7th August 1961, 10:15 am, Tripartite Conference, August 1961, Vc/b/1961/33, File No. None [Archives Dr. No. 198, 199], NAB.

be, "as quickly as possible," handed over to Southern Cameroons. Commissioner JO Field informed the delegates that Southern Cameroons encountered difficulties in the training of P&T telegraphists due to the lack of equipment for the training. He proposed that the Republic of Cameroon could make the equipment available, and Ahidjo agreed.

The delegates extensively discussed the issue of customs and ports especially customs which involved frontier controls regarding importation of weapons to equip terrorists. Foncha pointed out that the frontier between Southern Cameroons and Nigeria was manned by Nigerians, rather than by Cameroonians, and all efforts to get Cameroonians to be transferred to the customs at the frontier or mix with Nigerian customs officers had failed. Foncha appreciated the fact that Customs would be a federal matter in the federation of Cameroon. But, Eastwood advised that while eventually "customs ought to be a federal matter...until there has been expert examination and division of revenue ..., each part of the new Federation will have to continue its own customs arrangements." Ahidjo accepted Eastwood's advice. The ports of Victoria and Bota were also examined and although ports were a federal matter, it was agreed that an interim measure was necessary to have the ports managed by Southern Cameroons.

3. Civil Service Expatriates

It was agreed in June 1961 that through an Aid Mission, British expatriates would be employed by Southern Cameroons but their employment would be financed by the UK Government. Unfortunately, the UK Government withdrew the promise and because of financial constraints, Southern Cameroons scaled down the number of British expatriate officers it could afford to pay. Foncha, therefore, requested the UK Government to reconsider its Aid mission. Eastwood explained that "the security situation ... [was thought] to be so bad that very few British officers have been ready to stay even with a British government guarantee of their salaries." With the improved security situation, Eastwood agreed to report to his government that the Aid Mission should be resurrected and he was confident that Foncha's request would "be regarded sympathetically." But Eastwood cautioned that "so much time has now passed by that many officers have already made arrangements to leave [Southern Cameroons] and it will be difficult to persuade them to stay." He also indicated that should the UK government agree to pay the salaries of expatriate officers who would accept to remain in Southern Cameroons, the amount would be deducted from the £500,000 of assistance promised by the UK Government to Southern Cameroons.

4. Nigerian Currency as Legal Tender

This issue was the use of the Nigerian currency (pound/sterling) in Southern Cameroons and the Franc CFA in the Republic of Cameroon. Eastwood explained that the Central Bank of Nigeria had agreed to continue to issue Nigerian currency for three months after 1st October 1961 and it could “still remain the ...[currency] for a few months after 1st January [1962].” Eastwood raised three conditions for the Nigerian currency to be used in Southern Cameroons:

- i. A formal request for it by the government of the Republic of Cameroon;
- ii. The Central Bank of Nigeria should have sole right to issue the currency during this period because there could not be two currency authorities in a country at the same time; and,
- iii. The exchange control arrangements at the time should continue.

5. National Defense and Security

The subject of national defence and security was paramount to Ahidjo given the terrorist activities in the Republic of Cameroon which, from time-to-time, affected Southern Cameroons. The responsibility for the maintenance of order on handing over was agreed that it would be given to the armed forces of the Federated Cameroon which would take over from the British forces after 1st October 1961. The UK delegation was informed by Ahidjo that meetings between military experts from the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons were successfully concluded and close contacts between the military authorities of both territories would continue until British troops left Southern Cameroons. Eastwood politely refused Ahidjo's understanding that authority should be given “for pursuit [of terrorists] over frontier line so that terrorists should be destroyed.”

Ahidjo raised the issue of the transfer of British military camps and equipment. He went on to propose a token price for them and requested that the military camps should not be dismantled or moved before 1st October. Eastwood agreed that the UK would keep the military camps which were valued at £400,000 on a commercial basis for the new Federation. Ahidjo requested that the camps should not be dealt with on a commercial basis. The equipment in the camps was valued at £10,000 and “an amicable arrangement about that can be agreed,” Eastwood told the delegates. The main worry of the UK delegation was, however, the security of British citizens and subjects given the terrorist activities in the Republic of Cameroon.

6. Transfer of Sovereignty

This was one of the most politically sensitive thorny issues which pre-occupied the three delegations. Ahidjo began the discussion by informing the UK delegation that “the Southern Cameroons and ourselves have agreed on a draft revision of the constitution for the Republic so that on the 1st of October we will have a Federal Constitution.” Eastwood responded that “we on this side of the table are delighted to hear that this agreement has been reached” and he thanked Ahidjo for explaining some of the principal points.

When Ahidjo talked of “a final ceremony of transfer of sovereignty,” Eastwood cautioned that it would not be appropriate to say that there would be a “transfer of sovereignty” and he explained that:

[All what] will really happen is that on the 1st October, on mid-night of the 30th September our responsibility will cease and we will “...fade out of the picture.” The advice of our lawyers is ... that there should simply be, before the 30th of September an exchange of notes on or about the 15th of September, an exchange of notes between the two Governments ... we have here a translation we could hand over to you on the suggested exchange of notes. I have one copy of it in English which I will give Mr. Foncha to share with Messrs Muna, Jua and Kemcha.... I will ask our ambassador to take this matter up with your Foreign Minister [Charles Okala].

Eastwood went on to state that there were certain fundamental issues in “any transfer of sovereignty, or when one state secedes that power to another.” He outlined them as follows:

- i. The new Federation would formally accept responsibility for the external liabilities of the two constituent states: in this case, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons;
- ii. The new Federation would assume responsibility for adherence to the international treaties to which the constituent states adhere; and,
- iii. The external liabilities of Southern Cameroons were £350,000 of which a portion was still to be paid to Southern Cameroons.

During the 3rd session of the Tripartite Talks on Monday, 7 August 1961, Eastwood added “The Position of the Cameroons Development Corporation” on the agenda.

The Position of the Cameroons Development Corporation

In presenting the position of the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC), Eastwood explained its unhealthy financial situation and the investment which the Colonial Development Corporation was to put in to beef up the CDC. The Colonial Development Corporation was obligated "to put in forthwith £1 million of capital with an agreement that the company would be reconstituted with a different capital structure and then the Colonial Development Corporation would put in a further £2 million for a total investment of £3,000,000." At the moment, Eastwood continued, the CDC owed the Nigerian Government £1,000,000 which was not shares; and the CDC owed the Southern Cameroons Government £750,000. At the end of the discussion on the CDC, Ahidjo concluded that experts would be sent to Southern Cameroons "to study the matter more closely."

The importance of the Yaounde Tripartite Talks was in the far-reaching decisions which the delegates approved. It should be noted that the "Talks" was recommended by the UN and it dispelled the false assertion by some Cameroonians that the promised or required tripartite discussions never took place. At the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, it was agreed, amongst others, that:

1. The Federation would go operational on 1st October 1961;
2. Ahidjo and Foncha would be the President and Vice-President respectively;
3. There would be a Federal Legislature of 50 members comprising 40 from the Republic of Cameroon National Assembly and 10 from the SCHA;
4. The provisional Federal Constitution would remain operational until 1st April 1963;
5. General elections would be held before 1963 and a permanent constitution established; and,
6. The issue of the "transfer of sovereignty" was resolved.⁴⁶

Ahidjo's unsolicited, but revealing explanation, at the end of the "Talks" relating to the relation between the Republic of Cameroon and France coupled with Eastwood's response indicated that Britain was fully aware of the difficulties that awaited a reunified Cameroon. The "Talks" ended with a prophetic grim warning from Eastwood on the rocky road of reunification.

⁴⁶ Milne, *No Telephone*, 439; see also *Cameroons Champion*, 8th August 1961.

Eastwood's Grim Prophecy on Reunification

The Yaounde Tripartite Talks gave the first glimpse into Ahidjo's knowledge of the perception which the people of the Republic of Cameroon, Southern Cameroons and the international community had on the influence of France and French culture on him and the people of the Republic of Cameroon in general.⁴⁷ This influence, it was believed, and rightly so, affected the reunified Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons; that is, the Federal Republic of Cameroon. As Ahidjo explained at the end of the "Talks:"

For a long time there were accusations that we had corrupted the Cameroun into a French way. We always kept very cool when we were accused of such things, we pointed out that the presence of France for over forty years in the Cameroons was a fact and that this made *it impossible for France to leave our country without leaving any traces of her presence. She left behind things she had accomplished. Men were being trained by France in French culture and all this expressed the friendly feeling we have for France* [Emphasis added].

In reaction to Ahidjo's statement, Eastwood said:

We have plenty of experience in other parts of the world of the long-lasting quality of French culture.... Nevertheless, the fact that of these two cultures [the British and the French], *two ways of life which are basic to your country and the Southern Cameroons* exist and, as we [the British] have had occasion to say several times, *the marriage of these two countries is going to be inevitably a long and not very easy process* [Emphasis added].

In stating that France "left behind things she had accomplished," Ahidjo deliberately did not mention the fact that on 26 December 1959, France and French Cameroon had signed a secret Franco-Cameroun Agreement which was re-enforced on 13 November 1960.⁴⁸ The Franco-Cameroun Agreement was ratified by France by Law No. 60 1435 of

47 In December 1959, France signed a secret accord with French Cameroon and in November 1960, France and the Republic of Cameroon signed ten secret treaties. In April 1961, a French delegation led by Prime Minister Michel Debré and a delegation of the Republic of Cameroon led by Prime Minister Charles Assalé met in Paris at the Hôtel Matignon "to confirm their commitment to the French community."

48 The November 1960 secret cooperation accords were ten:

- a. A diplomatic Convention;
- b. A Cooperative agreement on economic, financial and momentary matters;
- c. A Convention regulating relations between the French and Cameroonian treasuries;
- d. A general technical cooperation agreement on matters of personnel;
- e. A Cooperation agreement on matters of civil aviation, aerial navigation, air bases, and meteorology;

27 December 1960 and by the Republic of Cameroun by Law No. 60-78 of 30 December 1960.⁴⁹

It is interesting to note that while Ahidjo applauded and embraced France and the French culture, Dr. EML Endeley of the Opposition CPNC in September 1961, in the SCHa and in the presence of Commissioner JO Field, castigated the British and doubted if there would be any trace of British culture in Southern Cameroons after five years of the departure of the British. Dr. EML Endeley pointedly said:

[I] cannot remember of any territory in British colonial history that has been left in the plight of the Southern Cameroons. *It is doubtful if 5 years hence, there would be a single vestige of the British contact to be seen in the Southern Cameroons....* One question the British should ask themselves when they leave this territory [on 1st October 1961] is whether they leave the people with a sense of accomplishment [Emphasis added].⁵⁰

Foncha, however, at the same occasion in September 1961 in the SCHa, painted a very positive picture of British administration in Southern Cameroons saying: "the people of the Cameroons will never forget ... [the] conduct and noble work of the British Government during the 44 years of [British] colonial administration [in] Southern Cameroons."⁵¹ Although Dr. EML Endeley's assessment of the British legacy in Southern Cameroons differed from that of Premier Foncha, the former gave a true and realistic picture of British administration in Southern Cameroons especially in terms of socio-economic development and infrastructure when compared to that of the French in the Republic of Cameroon.

There was general consensus by Southern Cameroons politicians in the 1940s and 1950s, including Foncha when he was in the KNC, that the British had neglected the socio-economic and infrastructural development of Southern Cameroons. The difference between the impact of French culture in the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) and British culture in Southern Cameroons played a tremendous influence

-
- f. An agreement on military technical assistance;
 - g. A Convention on the role and status of the French military mission in Cameroon;
 - h. A cultural convention;
 - i. A consular convention; and,
 - j. A legal convention.

49 When Southern Cameroons achieved independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961, these secret accords were not revised.

50 *Cameroons Champion*, 15th September 1961.

51 *Ibid.*

in the implementation of the federal constitution which reunified the two peoples *on the basis of a federation*. The management of the two foreign cultures to the advantage of the people of the Republic of Cameroon was greatly, if not solely, responsible for the making of the Anglophone Problem.

Analysis of the Organisation and Conduct of the “Talks”

The Yaounde Tripartite Talks achieved the primary objective for which it was convened: put the Fomuban draft federal constitutional proposals into a legal and constitutional form. The delegates, in so doing, watered the seeds of the Anglophone Problem which were planted during the Fomuban Conference as the “Talks” also settled the thorny issue of the “Transfer of Sovereignty.” Ahidjo, at the end of the Fomuban Conference, invited Premier Foncha and his colleagues to the next meeting to put the Fomuban proposals into a constitutional form.

Premier Foncha and the KNDP Government, unfortunately, ignored the call for unity and solidarity given that the Southern Cameroons delegation to the Yaounde Tripartite Talks was an all-KNDP delegation. This defeated the goal of the KNDP-CPNC “truce” and the collective and united stance which Southern Cameroons would have had during the negotiations/talks. This view was well articulated by the *Times* (London) when it stated in its 19 June 1961 edition that “it would be more reassuring if the two parties [the KNDP and the CPNC] could come together again, for the Southern Cameroons cannot afford the luxury of an opposition.”⁵² The essence and importance of a united front was echoed by Deputy Commissioner Milne as follows: “A single unified request would have been hard to resist at any stage ... [and] at the appropriate time it could have been crucial.”⁵³ The exclusion of the CPNC, in spite of the 13:13 parity in the SCHA between the KNDP and the CPNC, from all discussions and meetings which were held after Fomuban to fine-tune the reunification constitution and package before 1st October 1961 divided the Southern Cameroons political fabric.

There is no doubt that Article 47, with its clause against secession, which was not in the Fomuban proposals on the Article, would not have been accepted during the “Intra-Cameroonian dialogue” of 2-4 August 1961 if the CPNC had participated at the Tripartite Talks. This assessment is supported by the fact that during the debate in the SCHA on 13 September 1961, Motomby-Woleta of the CPNC criticized Article 47 and specifically hoped “that Foncha would place himself in a position to be able to hop across [to] Yaounde and say to President Ahidjo, ‘I think we have made a mistake

52 Cited in Milne, *No Telephone*, 432

53 Ibid.

here.”⁵⁴ In another decision which directly impacted on the so-called “equal status,” the delegates accepted that while the National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon had to deliberate and adopt the draft constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the SCHA was not required, neither was it allowed, to exercise this fundamental constitutional right.

The people of Southern Cameroons were, therefore, governed by a constitution which they were never consulted for its adoption either directly through a referendum or indirectly through their elected representatives in the SCHA. When AN Jua raised the issue on 7 August 1961 at the “Talks,” the Attorney-General, BG Smith, replied that “by virtue of the terms put at the plebiscite, whatever constitution is accepted by East Cameroon, West Cameroon is bound to accept it....”⁵⁵ Although the Attorney-General was a member of the Southern Cameroons delegation, it should be noted that he was, first and foremost, a British citizen and a British colonial official. There is no doubt that the SCBA would have objected, on legal and constitutional grounds, to such an obnoxious and undemocratic imposition; but the Southern Cameroons delegation accepted the explanation of the Attorney-General.

Surprisingly, in December 1994, Foncha, at the Constitutional Consultative Commission in Yaounde, stated, before walking out of the Commission, that:

I can state here and now that the people of Southern Cameroons would never have voted in favour of unification if it had not been for the assurances that the resulting union would take the form of a federation....[We have made several endeavours] at various stages of the evolution of post-unification Cameroon to dissuade those who monopolized and held the full reigns of political, financial, judicial, military and police powers in our country from acting autocratically in breach of promises that they had given us and our people....[The] people of Southern Cameroons never participated in the elaboration and adoption of the supposed federal constitution of 1961 which was adopted by the National Assembly of La République du CamerounThe same people never participated in drawing up the unitary constitution of 1972 which was imposed upon them in a nationwide referendum.... I feel all the more distressed that this [Constitutional Consultative Commission] should be happening under the chairmanship of a son [Simon Achidi Achu] of Southern Cameroons.... Today, he has been designated to preside

54 West Cameroon House of Assembly Debates: Official Report (Buea: Government Press, 1961), 88.

55 Secret: Tripartite Conference, Yaounde, August 1961, File no. None [Archives Dr. No. 198, 199], NAB.

over the completion of the process of annexation of that people and that Territory [Emphasis added].⁵⁶

Foncha's speech in the SCHA in April 1961; his action at the Bamenda "All-Party Conference;" his speeches at the Foumban Conference; his failure to have the CPNC and the SCBA in his delegation to the Yaounde Tripartite Talks; his position at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks; the SCHA debates on 13 September 1961; the series of meetings which finally led to reunification on 1st October 1961; his unflagging campaign for the abrogation of the federation in May 1972 because it had "outlived its usefulness;" and, his complete *volte-face* in 1994 clearly indicated the calibre of some of the prominent Southern Cameroons politicians who drove the reunification train in Southern Cameroons. Of course, in politics, personal and political interests count more than statements and speeches. Ahidjo defended his political interests and those of the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) and it was incumbent on Foncha and Southern Cameroons politicians to do the same.

Finally, the Yaounde Tripartite Talks settled the burning issue of the "transfer of sovereignty." At the Buea Tripartite Talks of 15-17 May 1961 and 14-19 June 1961, Ahidjo had wanted that the "sovereignty" of Southern Cameroon should be transferred to him (the Republic of Cameroon) on 1st October 1961. On both occasions, Foncha countered Ahidjo's proposal and advanced that "sovereignty" should be transferred to a federation which would have been created before 1st October 1961 and not to the Republic of Cameroon. At the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, Ahidjo and Eastwood dominated the discussion on the "transfer of sovereignty" with Foncha and the Southern Cameroons delegates listening as "silent observers." UN Resolution 1608 (XV) invited London, Yaounde and Buea to work out the termination of UK trusteeship over Southern Cameroons before 1st October 1961. And the three parties finally agreed that an "Exchange of Notes" would settle the vexing problem of "transfer of sovereignty."

Some Anglophone political activists claimed, falsely, that because a "Union Treaty" between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons was never signed and deposited at the Secretariat of the UN, the 1st October 1961 reunion was null and void.⁵⁷ This argument was paper thin and carried no weight because Section or Point 5 of UN

56 John Ngu Foncha, "The Cameroons Unification Revisited: The John Ngu Foncha Declaration," Yaounde, December 1994. The author has taken the liberty to generously cite Foncha's declaration for a better understanding and appreciation of the Anglophone Problem and Crisis.

57 See Mola Njoh Litumbe, "Memorandum in support of the Inalienable Right of the People of Southern Cameroons for Self-Determination," Buea, 25 August 2009; and, Kennedy Abang, *Southern Cameroons: Negotiating an Existence* (n.p.: writivism, n.d.), 279-302.

Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961 gave the Administering Authority (the UK), the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons the full and complete authority to initiate measures to ensure that all arrangements were finalized before 1st October 1961; and, several meetings were held by the three parties which were geared towards accomplishing the task. It never required London, Yaounde and Buea either to consult or report back to any other actor along the way. At the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, all the three parties agreed on an “Exchange of Notes.”

These Anglophone political activists referred to Articles 102 and 103 of the UN which required a “Union Treaty;” but, UN Resolution 1608 (XV) released the Republic of Cameroon, Southern Cameroons and the UK from Articles 102 and 103. In addition, Southern Cameroons reunification with the Republic of Cameroon was not accomplished through legal negotiations which would have warranted the signing of an international treaty; it was through an UN-organised plebiscite in Southern Cameroons. The concept/principle of a Union Treaty was/is of utmost importance ONLY when the affected members want an organ/body of the UN to intervene in a complaint or problem affecting the member-states concerned; it does not infringe on the validity or legality of an international treaty between or amongst states. Furthermore, Article 102 concerned member-states of the UN and Southern Cameroons was not a member of the UN. The Republic of Cameroon became a UN member in September 1960 and never called into question the discussions which finally led to Southern Cameroons achieving independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961. The reunification was a political process sanctioned by an UN-supervised and sponsored plebiscite in Southern Cameroons.

On the question of whether copies of the Exchange of Notes between London and Yaounde were registered and deposited at the Secretariat of the UN or not, it is worth noting that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ruled that international treaties or Exchange of Notes, registered and deposited at the Secretariat of the UN or not, is valid and binding. The registration and submission of copies at the Secretariat of the UN only becomes necessary and important when there is a problem related to the treaty or the Exchange of Notes which has to be addressed by any of the relevant bodies of the UN. According to Monono, the Law of Treaties and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Practice recognise “Exchange of Notes” as one of the three practices and procedures on the “transfer of sovereignty.” The others are: the Enactment of Independence Bills and the signing of Independence Agreements.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 264-265.

According to Justice Paul Ayah, however, in his write-up entitled "In All Honesty," "there is little doubt that the requirement of the UNGA Resolution 1608 (XV) for three nations to meet TO FINALIZE...THE ARRANGEMENTS for Southern Cameroons' Independence by joining was NOT COMPLIED WITH! [Emphasis in original]"⁵⁹ because a document or relevant instrument sanctioning the execution of UN Resolution 1608 (XV) was not available. Justice Ayah added that "WHOEVER HOLDS TO THE CONTRARY SHOULD PRODUCE THE RELEVANT DOCUMENT, OR, AT LEAST, JUST NAME THE INSTRUMENT [Emphasis in original]."⁶⁰ The position of Justice Ayah was swiftly accepted and applauded by supporters of the separation and independence of the North West and South West Regions.

Unfortunately, some of them ignored the fact that the Governments of the UK, Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon held several tripartite meetings in response to the UN request "to initiate urgent discussions with a view to finalizing... the arrangements by which the agreed and declared policies of the parties concerned will be implemented." While these meetings were held, Ahidjo and Foncha made it abundantly clear that the decision on the independence of Southern Cameroons was a Cameroonian affair which had to be decided by Cameroonians. Foncha went as far as saying, at Foumban, that it was foolish to look for help elsewhere.

On 1st August 1961, the UK Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies went along with Ahidjo and Foncha when he stated that "the actual constitutional arrangements *are essentially matters for the Cameroonians themselves*" [Emphasis added].⁶¹ In fact, at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks in August 1961, Ahidjo informed the UK delegation that the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons had already agreed on a constitution.

59 Ayah Paul Abine, "In All Honesty," 23 April 2021. Barrister Ayah Paul Abine was born in 1950 at Ngali in Akwaya sub-division in Manyu Division. He read law at the University of Yaounde. After graduation, he passed the competitive entrance examination into the prestigious School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) in 1976. He was the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal in Buea. In 2002, he was elected as an MP into the National Assembly of Cameroon as a member of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). In August 2007, he was elected Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. He was, at one time, Advocate-General at the Supreme Court in Cameroon. He resigned from the CPDM in January 2011 and left the National Assembly in 2012. He joined the opposition People's Action Party (PAP). Following the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis (see chapters five, six and seven), Magistrate Ayah Paul was arrested in January 2017 for allegedly calling for a return to the federal structure in Cameroon. He was released from prison in August 2017. In March 2019, he resigned as President of PAP.

60 Ibid.

61 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

Furthermore, the three governments agreed on an Exchange of Notes to finalize Southern Cameroons independence by its joining the Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961.

Finally, the UK, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons were not obligated to return to the UN to get its blessing on whether UN Resolution 1608 (XV) was successfully implemented or not. On 27 February 1962, the UK officially informed the UN that it had ended its trusteeship administration over Southern Cameroons. The UN did not call into question the measures and steps which the three governments took to discharge the said UN Resolution that led to the independence of Southern Cameroons by its joining the Republic of Cameroon on 1st October 1961; and, neither the Republic of Cameroon nor Southern Cameroons raised any objection.

Yaounde Tripartite Talks to Independence by Joining

The Yaounde Tripartite Talks sealed the fate of Southern Cameroonians as steps were taken jointly by London, Yaounde and Buea, as advised by the UN in Resolution 1608 (XV), to take measures to ensure that the UK trusteeship was terminated and the plebiscite result for reunification between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons implemented on 1st October 1961. On 10 August 1961, the National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon met to examine the draft constitution of the to-be-formed Federal Republic of Cameroon. On 16 August, the National Assembly adopted the draft by a vote of eighty-eight (88) Yes; six (6) Abstentions; and, two (2) null. The six abstentions came from the legal wing of the UPC in the Assembly led by Theodore Mayi Matip. The UPC abstained because its proposals were rejected at the Fouban Conference. The UPC had proposed the following, amongst others: the creation of a federal Senate and the limitation of the presidential mandate.⁶²

In order to examine in details the situation of Southern Cameroonians working in Nigeria as civil servants and Nigerian civil servants in Southern Cameroons, a Quadrilateral Talks was held in Lagos from 11-17 August 1961.⁶³ The "Talks," which was in line with the discussions of the 5-7 August Yaounde Tripartite Talks, led to the repatriation of some Southern Cameroonians who were in Nigeria as civil servants and some Nigerian civil servants were retained in Southern Cameroons. Later on

⁶² *La Presse du Cameroun*, 24 août 1961, 2.

⁶³ The Quadrilateral delegation comprised the UK led by Christopher Eastwood and it included Commissioner J.O. Field; the Nigerian delegation; the Southern Cameroons delegation led by S.T. Muna included Simon-Joseph Epale; and, the Republic of Cameroon delegation led by Alfred Ngando-Black.

23-24 August, another meeting between a delegation of the Republic of Cameroon led by Prime Minister Charles Assalé and a Southern Cameroons delegation led by Prime Minister Foncha was held in Yaounde.⁶⁴ The meeting was aimed at examining the administrative and economic situation of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons in preparation for the organization of the celebrations of 1st October 1961. Both delegations also examined the “Ebubu Massacre” of 8 August 1961 which almost derailed the reunification train.⁶⁵ In fact, it threatened the handing over responsibility and the celebrations of 1st October 1961.⁶⁶

On 4 September 1961, Prime Minister Foncha tabled the constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, which had been signed into law on 1st September by President Ahidjo, before the SCHC and asked the chiefs to approve “the action of the leaders of the Southern Cameroons in the negotiations” with the Ahidjo government; the motion was overwhelmingly approved on 5 September. A similar motion was tabled in the SCHA on 18 September by ST Muna. The motion called on the House to approve the actions of the leaders of the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons of the “brotherly manner in which they have conducted the negotiations.” After heated debate on several points in the constitution raised by the CPNC, the motion was ruled as “Question put and agreed.”⁶⁷ The motions tabled by Foncha in the SCHC and Muna in

64 The delegation of the Republic of Cameroon comprised Prime Minister Charles Assalé, Foreign Minister Charles Okala, Rostand Mvie, Alfred Ngando-Black and Epo Manfred. The Southern Cameroons delegation consisted of Prime Minister Foncha, AN Jua, Attorney-General BG Smith, Lt. Valentine, Police Superintendent H. Ntune, Dr. Bernard Fonlon as official interpreter and Nicholas Ade Ngwa, the Prime Minister’s Private Secretary.

65 The “Ebubu Massacre” was the savage assassination of twelve CDC workers in the Ebubu CDP camp in Tombel by thirty members of the dreaded and ill-disciplined *Gardes Civiques* of the Republic of Cameroon Army. The army mistook the CDC workers for terrorists from the Republic of Cameroon. Such “cross-frontier pursuits” was decried by the UK delegation at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks. Ahidjo sent a two-man delegation to Buea on a fact-finding mission. In a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner Milne, the two-man delegation was told that the Yaounde government should “accept blame, apologies and pay compensation” and Foncha agreed “that whoever is guilty of this cruel murder will be severely punished.” Foncha, with the delegation from Yaounde, visited the bereaved families and gave each of them £50. On 24 August 1961, Assalé and Foncha issued a joint communiqué setting up a commission of inquiry to examine the circumstances of the massacre and establish the culprits. See Milne, *No Telephone*, 440; Ngoh, *Untold Story*, 58-61; SCIS, B, “A Message from the Hon. Premier,” *Press Release No. 1505*, 15th August 1961, NAB; and, SCIS, B, “Premier Donates £50 to Relatives of deceased CDC Workers,” *Press Release No. 1509*, 15th August 1961, NAB.

66 Milne, *No Telephone*, 439-440.

67 The debates in the SCHC and SCHA relating to the constitution are found in *House of Assembly Debates*, 86-103 and all quotations are from the source indicated.

the SCHA had nothing to do with the deliberations and adoption of the constitution. The motions did not request the adoption and/or ratification of the constitution but rather for the approval of “the action of the leaders” and their brotherly manner in the negotiations.

On 25 September, Queen Elizabeth II⁶⁸ of the UK issued a Proclamation which declared “the termination of ... [British Trusteeship Agreement of 13 December 1946] with respect to the Southern Cameroons on the 1st day of October 1961.” The UK, the Proclamation continued, “shall as from that date cease to be responsible for the administration of the Southern Cameroons.”⁶⁹ The Queen’s Proclamation ended British administration of Southern Cameroons but it did not involve the “transfer of sovereignty” and did not grant independence to Southern Cameroons. The British military camps and equipment, as discussed at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, were transferred to the Government of the Republic of Cameroon on 25 September. On 27 September 1961, and in conformity with the agreement at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, the British Ambassador in Yaounde, His Excellency Cecil Edward King, and President Ahidjo, through the Exchange of Notes, executed the “transfer of sovereignty.” In fact, Ambassador King informed Ahidjo in the Exchange of Notes that:

On the instructions of my government and in compliance with Resolution 1608 (XV) of the General Assembly of the United Nations, dated 21 April 1961 ... I have the honour to inform you that the [British] Trusteeship shall cease to be exercised in Southern Cameroons at midnight on the 30th September 1961, *as this territory will join the Republic of Cameroon* at 00.00 hours on 1 October 1961 [Emphasis added].⁷⁰

Ahidjo, through Foreign Minister Charles Okala, replied with an Exchange of Notes to the British Ambassador saying:

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of today’s date ... I note that ... *Southern Cameroons will join the Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961*, and that, in consequence, the United Kingdom trusteeship

68 Elizabeth Alexandra Mary (born in April 1926 and died in September 2022), known as Queen Elizabeth II, was the Queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms. Her reign began on 6 February 1952. She died on 8 September 2022. She reigned far longer than any other monarch in British history. In 2022, she and the members of the Commonwealth celebrated her 70th anniversary as the British monarch.

69 Cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*, 276.

70 Ibid., 277.

over this territory will cease to be exercised at midnight on 30 September 1961 [Emphasis added].⁷¹

With the Exchange of Notes, the thorny issue of “transfer of sovereignty” was resolved.

Independence upon Joining the Republic of Cameroon

UN Resolution 1608 (XV) which was cited in the two Exchange of Notes clearly indicated that Southern Cameroons did not achieve independence before joining or reunifying with the Republic of Cameroon. The idea of a call for the “restoration” of the independence of Southern Cameroons by separatist forces during the Anglophone Crisis (see chapters five, six and seven) was, therefore, baffling, to say the least. After 27 September 1961, the reunification train gathered speed. On 29 September, Premier Foncha made “an Eve of Independence and Unification Statement to the Press” in which he declared: “I will like to make this clear that in this new nation there is nothing which the Southern Cameroons has lost and I can also say that we have nothing to fear in this union.”⁷² Unfortunately, in less than a month, Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961 proved him wrong (see chapter five).

Meanwhile, on 30 September 1961, Mr. and Mrs. Field were seen off at Bota by Premier Foncha, Southern Cameroons Ministers and the population that turned out *en masse*. A Guard of Honour was provided by the Cameroon Republic army and Grenadiers; the *HMS Diana* took Mr. and Mrs. Field to Lagos where they flew to London. Later at 5:00 pm, President Ahidjo arrived at the Tiko Airport where he was received by Premier Foncha and Deputy Commissioner Milne and other dignitaries. Ahidjo inspected a Guard of Honour made up of the Grenadiers and the Cameroon National Army; there was the singing of the Cameroon national anthem; the beating of the retreat and the Union Jack was lowered. From the Tiko Airport, Foncha and Ahidjo drove to Buea for the next part of the ceremony at the Buea Mountain Hotel where Ahidjo gave a reception to over 200 guests at 10:30pm. The official ceremony at the Buea Mountain Hotel provided for three speeches: a Message from Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain to President Ahidjo as President of Federal Republic of Cameroon; a Message from the British Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod; and, an Address to the nation by President Ahidjo at midnight.

The Queen’s Message was read by the British ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon, Cecil Edwards King. In her Message to President Ahidjo, the Queen said:

71 UN Document A/5097 of 2 March 1962, Annex I, cited in Monono, *Delicate Negotiations*; 277.

72 *The Post*, 22 February 2016, 8.

On the occasion of the ending of United Kingdom trusteeship in Southern Cameroons, I send you Excellency my sincere good wishes.... I am glad that friendly cooperation between our two countries should have made it possible for the Southern Cameroons to attain independence in accordance with the results of the February plebiscite.⁷³

In the Message of Iain Macleod to Prime Minister Foncha read by Milne, Macleod expressed Britain's preparedness in "maintaining with the federation of Cameroon the happy ties of friendship which have linked us with the Southern Cameroons now for over 40 years."⁷⁴ At midnight, before President Ahidjo delivered his Address to the nation, 21 gunshots and the ringing of bells dominated the Buea sky heralding the birth of a new nation. Ahidjo's Address centered on the need for unity; reconciliation; development; and, peace. In addressing Cameroonians, Ahidjo said:

After more than forty years, we are, today, setting up again, one family, one Nation, one State ... in less than two years; they [Southern Cameroonians] have achieved the two essential objectives which they set for themselves: independence and Reunification. *May this reunification of the national territory be the pledge and the symbol of the unity of our hearts and minds; such is my wish this day to all Cameroonians... bringing together, today, people of [the] French and English expression...* [Emphasis added].⁷⁵

At zero hour on 30 September 1961, the new nation, West Cameroon, attained independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon; and the two states became the Federal Republic of Cameroon as of 1st October 1961. On the morning of 1st October 1961, the flag of the Federal Republic of Cameroon was hoisted throughout the national territory. Ahidjo, accompanied by Prime Minister Foncha, reviewed the troops; military and civilian march pasts followed; and some meritorious architects of reunification were decorated.⁷⁶ Later, Foncha, as Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon and Prime Minister of West Cameroon, addressed the nation saying:

Cameroonians, *today Southern Cameroons is free, [re]unification is achieved:*

73 West Cameroon Information Service (WCIS), Buea, "Southern Cameroons (West Cameroon) Achieves Independence By Joining Cameroon Republic to For-Federal Cameroon Republic Forms State of West Cameroon in New Federal Cameroon Republic," *Press Release No. 1562*, 7th October 1961.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Those who were decorated included Chief Abel Mukete, Dr. Godfred Gustave Dibue and Sam Mofor.

part of the Cameroon nation is retrieved....some have told us to wait until we have become economically viable, but of course, nowhere in the world has economic viability ever been the yardstick for independence... we should change our hearts and ways to make the Federal Republic of Cameroon workable [Emphasis added].⁷⁷



Ahidjo addressing the Cameroon Nation, midnight 30 September 1961

On his Right: Deputy Commissioner Malcolm Milne and Prime Minister John N. Foncha

On his Left: British Ambassador Cecil E. King

Southern Cameroons achieved independence on 1st October 1961 upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon in an atmosphere of subdued jubilation. Even nature seemed to have been wary as the heavy down pour of rain in Buea contributed in dampening the jubilation.'

In continuation of the official activities, in the afternoon, the members of the West Cameroon House of Assembly (WCHA) and the West Cameroon House of Chiefs (WCHC) were sworn-in and Foncha addressed both Houses. President Ahidjo, who flew back to Yaounde on the 1st October, hosted reunification celebration ceremonies in Yaounde for members of the diplomatic corps resident in Yaounde. The reunification process continued on 6 October 1961 with the approval of the constitution of West

77 WCIS, B, Press Release No. 1562.

Cameroon by the West Cameroon House of Assembly. The West Cameroon Constitution explicitly stated in Article 57(1) that:

In this Constitution, unless it is otherwise expressly provided or required by the context- 'Federation' means the Federal Republic of Cameroon....⁷⁸

Prime Minister Foncha personally took the Constitution of West Cameroon to Yaounde for Ahidjo's signature. On 27 February 1962, Britain officially informed the UN Secretary-General in a *Note Verbale* that it had terminated its trusteeship over British Cameroons. Southern Cameroons tortuous journey towards independence ended upon the territory joining the Republic of Cameroon.

The achievement of independence by Southern Cameroons joining the Republic of Cameroon was not without problems as discussed earlier. The UK, the UN, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons were aware of the problems. But the freely expressed wishes of the peoples of Southern Cameroons and the feelings of African nationalism in the search for a "United States of Africa" carried the day. According to Thomson:

The possibilities through bringing these two territories are considerable, not only for themselves but for the kind of example which they [the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons] can set for other African territories in the future. If it is possible to bring about a peaceful and progressive union between the French-speaking and English-speaking territories, the old arbitrary boundaries of the nineteenth century pro-Consuls would be wiped out and we could get new countries established in Africa which would take better account of the feelings of African nationalism.⁷⁹

Hugh Fraser, the UK Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, definitely had the last word on Southern Cameroons independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon when he said in August 1961:

78 West Cameroon Government, *West Cameroon Constitution* (Buea: The Cameroon Press, 1961), A14. This clarification is very important because of Article 47 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon which rejected any revision of the constitution which affected the unity and integrity of the "Federation." Some political scientists, some Anglophone historians as well as some Cameroonian political activists misled some scholars and Cameroonians, especially Anglophones that "Federation" in Article 47 referred to the system of government and ignored the fact that it referred to the unity and integrity of the nation, state, polity or country.

79 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV-0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

It is not an easy matter for a small country to embark upon a course which involves a radical change in its whole structure. There are bound to be difficulties, but the people have chosen this way. I do not think that the leaders of the people of the Cameroons [Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons] have shut their eyes to the difficulties.⁸⁰

Was Southern Cameroons Independent Before Reunification?

In October 1956, the KNDP in a confidential letter to the *Union Nationale* of Soppo Priso indicated five stages which it would pursue to attain independence for Southern Cameroons:

- i. Separation from Nigeria in order to have direct dealings with the British government as the Administering Authority;
- ii. Have an Autonomous Legislative House for Southern Cameroons;
- iii. Direct negotiations for reunification;
- iv. Unification; and,
- v. Independence.⁸¹

In spite of Foncha's several public statements that the KNDP wanted Southern Cameroons to achieve independence and then negotiate reunification, the confidential letter of October 1956 clearly indicated reunification before independence. It should be underscored that the NEC meeting of the KNDP from 2-3 February 1959 adopted a resolution that Southern Cameroons should join (unify) French Cameroon before the latter attained its independence on 1st January 1960. This was also in line with Point IV of the October 1956 confidential letter.

Before 30 September 1961 and 1st October 1961, Southern Cameroons did not possess any of the attributes of an independent sovereign state (nation) such as: a flag, a motto, a seal, national anthem, an army or any diplomatic mission. Although, it should be noted, it had a permanent population, a defined territory and a government (1958-September 1961) which was under the supervision of the UK. The 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States codifies the declarative theory of statehood and stated, in Article 1, four criteria or conditions which a state should possess: permanent population; defined territory; government; and, the ability/capacity to conduct international relations. Southern Cameroons, between 1958 and

80 Ibid.

81 For the full letter, see Mukete, *My Odyssey*, 465-467.

September 1961 fulfilled two of the attributes namely: a permanent population and a defined territory but not the conditions of "a government and capacity to conduct international relations." Some Anglophone activists, *restorationists* and separatists argued, wrongly, that Southern Cameroons fulfilled all these four conditions before 1st October 1961 and therefore the territory was a state and independent.⁸²

It should be clearly stated that the governments of Southern Cameroons (Dr. EML Endeley from May 1958 to January 1959 and Foncha from January 1959 to September 1961) worked under the canopy of the Administering Authority, the UK. Southern Cameroons was still a UN trust territory. Article 5 of the UN Trusteeship Agreement was still enforced: The Administering Authority, the UK, "Shall have full powers of legislation, administration and jurisdiction in the territory and shall administer it in accordance with its own laws...." Secondly, Southern Cameroons never had the capacity to conduct international relations during its political/historical lifespan (1922-September 1961) and it was never authorized. Diplomatic and/or consular services were done by the UK on behalf of Southern Cameroons and the Foncha government, like the Dr. EML Endeley government, was not mandated and had no authority to engage in international relations with any foreign government.

Little wonder that, intentionally or not, Premier Foncha on the invitation of President Ahidjo and as head of the delegation of Southern Cameroons to the ceremony marking the independence of the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) on 1st January 1960 gave the latter "the option to forge ahead [on behalf of Southern Cameroons] with international negotiations for diplomatic relations." Foncha went on to say that: "We, however, knowing what we are looking for...would advise that we be consulted in any such international relations...."⁸³

In like manner, to assert that the Foncha government could not conduct international negotiations, in the discussions between President Ahidjo and Premier Foncha during the talks of 10, 11, 12 and 13th October 1960 which were sanctioned by a Joint Communiqué of 14 October 1960 and a Joint Declaration of October 1960, Foncha participated as head of the governing party, the KNDP, and not as head of government.

82 Barrister Charles Taku, a strong advocate for the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions, is a frontline member of this group who promotes the Ambazonian cause. Barrister Taku is head of the Taku Chambers which was founded in 1984 in Buea, Cameroon. He has practiced law for about 40 years and a lead counsel in several International Courts. He is currently the President of the International Criminal Court Bar Association.

83 "A Speech by Hon. J.N. Foncha, Premier of Southern Cameroons on the Occasion of the Independence Celebrations of the Cameroon Republic," 1st January 1960.

In these two documents, it was stated that "Considering that the representative of the Cameroun Republic [President Ahidjo] and the Government Party [KNDP] of the Southern Cameroons [Premier Foncha]...reaffirm the desire of their peoples to be united as one nation...."⁸⁴ Ahidjo participated as President of the Republic of Cameroon while Foncha participated as the head of a political party, the KNDP.

This point was driven home when, based on a complaint from the CPNC, JO Field explained that Foncha held the "Talks" and signed the communiqués as the head of the KNDP and not as head of government. Similarly, with regard to the question of "independence," The Southern Cameroons (Constitutional) Order-in-Council, 1960 did not grant independence to the territory. Southern Cameroons was still a UN Trust Territory administered by the UK. Since there was no independent state of Southern Cameroons, no foreign country accredited diplomats to Buea and Buea never sent diplomats to any foreign capital. There is no evidence of who declared the independence; and, when and where Southern Cameroons was declared an independent separate state in 1960 or before October 1961. The clamour for the "restoration of the independence of Southern Cameroons" was nothing more than a political hoax.

The absence of foreign dignitaries at the ceremonies on 30 September and 1 October 1961 in Buea representing countries such as the USA, the Soviet Union, France, Germany (West Germany at the time) and even the UN given that Southern Cameroons was a UN trust territory spoke volumes. On 1 January 1960, on the other hand, all these countries and the UN were represented by senior officials at the independence ceremony of the Republic of Cameroon; the UN, for example, was represented by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

While the independence of the Republic of Cameroon was greeted with a 101-gun salute, Southern Cameroons "independence" was greeted with a 21-gun salute. More importantly, UN Resolution 1608 (XV) clearly stated that British trusteeship administration of Southern Cameroons would be terminated at midnight on 30 September 1961 "*upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon*" [Emphasis added]. The UN invited Britain, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons to take appropriate measures to ensure that the UN Resolution was successfully implemented; and, that was what they did.

The outbreak of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016 (see chapters five, six and seven) opened

84 "Communiqué on the Constitutional Position of the Southern Cameroons in the Event of Electing to Become a Part of the Republic of Cameroon: The Two Alternatives," *Cameroon Review Magazine*, n.d., 10.

the floodgates of massive distortion of the history of Southern Cameroons quest for independence and reunification by some Cameroonian activists (both Anglophones and Francophones) including some academics. The “popular call” became the “restoration” of the territory’s independence whereas the territory was not independent before reuniting with or joining the Republic of Cameroon. This was especially so because the architects of reunification in both Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon regarded the former territory, wrongly, as part and parcel of the Republic of Cameroon. On 1st October 1961, in Buea, Prime Minister Foncha in his Address to the Nation in his capacity as Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon and Prime Minister of West Cameroon clearly stated that “[re]unification is achieved; part of the Cameroon nation is *retrieved* [Emphasis added].” In July 1962, at the *Union Camerounaise* (UC) party’s Fourth Congress at Ebolowa, Ahidjo put his finger on the spot when he said that the Republic of Cameroon transformed “itself into a federation, taking into account *“the return to it of a part of its territory...”* [Emphasis added].⁸⁵

Foncha and Ahidjo definitely knew what they were talking about. Foncha could not have referred to an independent Southern Cameroons before its reunification as “part of the Cameroon nation” being *retrieved*; or Ahidjo when he said *“the return to it [the Republic of Cameroon] of a part of its territory.”* Of course, Foncha completely missed the mark when, more than 30 years later, he complained that it was understood that “The federation would be a free association of independent and equal sovereign states.”⁸⁶ Yet, he and Southern Cameroonians accepted Article 47 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon which negated the argument of “a free association of independent and equal sovereign states.” A *Federation* does not always consist of “independent and equal sovereign states” unlike, broadly speaking, a *Confederation*. In short, Southern Cameroons was not an independent state before it joined the Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons became independent with the termination of British trusteeship administration only when it joined the Republic of Cameroon.

Little wonder that on 6 October 1961, Foncha, as Prime Minister of West Cameroon, took the draft constitution of West Cameroon to President Ahidjo for it to be signed into law. There was no argument that President Ahidjo could not have signed the constitution into law if Southern Cameroons had achieved independence outside reunification between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons; Southern Cameroons had no constitution as an independent state. If it had not accepted the plebiscite question of gaining independence by either joining Nigeria or the Republic

85 Ahmadou Ahidjo, “Statement on General Policy to the Ebolowa Congress of the Union Camerounaise, 4-8 July 1962,” 5 (Unpublished Manuscript).

86 *Times* (London), 15-22 June 2000, 5.

of Cameroon, it would not have achieved *independence* when it did and in the manner in which it did.

The clamour for the *restoration* of the territory's independence was nothing short of political hogwash or claptrap.

By adopting a federal system, the Republic of Cameroon led by Ahidjo and Southern Cameroons led by Foncha recognised the existence of two different "foreign imposed" cultures and political systems. In a federal system, the central authority represents "the whole, and acts on behalf of the whole in external affairs and in such internal affairs as are held to be of common interest." There are, however, in a federal structure, "state authorities with powers of legislation and administration within the sphere allotted to them by the constitution."⁸⁷ The federal system, therefore, reconciles "national unity with the maintenance" of the rights of the state(s) that constitute the federation.⁸⁸

Conclusion

Southern Cameroons tortuous march to independence ended on 1st October 1961 as the territory attained independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon. Ahidjo became the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon; Charles Assalé was the Prime Minister of East Cameroon; and, Foncha was the Prime Minister of West Cameroon. Ahidjo and Foncha agreed that reunification was based on a federal system and they recognized the existence of two different "foreign" cultures: the French culture and system in the Republic of Cameroon (East Cameroon) and the British Anglo-Saxon culture and system in Southern Cameroons (West Cameroon). They agreed to preserve the systems and cultures where they operated and to blend them only at the centre.

While Foncha thought that the independence of Southern Cameroons upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon through reunification meant that "part of the Cameroon nation is retrieved," Ahidjo believed that reunification made it possible for the return of part of the territory of the Republic of Cameroon. Small wonder, therefore, that in the implementation of the Federal Constitution of Cameroon, the Anglophone Problem was created. Southern Cameroons achieved independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon. The territory did not possess two of the four criteria of the Montevideo Convention for it to have been deemed to have attained statehood. Southern Cameroons was never independent before 1st October 1961.

⁸⁷ A. Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 495.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM

Introduction¹

The coming into being of the Federal Republic of Cameroon meant that both the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons surrendered their sovereignty to the federation. The failure of Cameroon's federation was dictated by the refusal of the political actors to accept the supremacy of the federal constitution; its rigidity; and, it was also due to the absence of a competent court to interpret the constitution without political interference. Southern Cameroonians, in their vast majority, desired that the *union* with the Republic of Cameroon should be based on federalism and they also desired a certain degree of local independence or autonomy. Thus, they wanted *union* in diversity and not *unity*; much less *integration*. Similarly, the Republic of Cameroon accepted federalism but a very dominant political current regarded it as a transitory measure to a unitary system.

In the implementation of the federal constitution, Ahidjo made sure that the reunification between the two territories was based on a highly centralized federal system. The constitution was framed in such a way that ultimate power was vested in the President who was both Head of State and Head of Government. The highly centralized federal system did not depart fundamentally from what had existed in the Republic of Cameroon before its independence and before its reunification with Southern Cameroons on 1st October 1961. But, it differed fundamentally from what existed in Southern Cameroons before its independence and reunification with the Republic of Cameroon and what was agreed upon at Foumban in July 1961 and at Yaounde in August 1961; thus the Anglophone Problem. The drafting of the federal constitution, its manner of adoption, and its implementation sowed the seeds of the Anglophone Problem.

1 This is a heavily revised and updated version of chapter eleven of *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The history of a People* by Victor Julius Ngoh. This version reflects the central thesis of *Former Southern Cameroons: The History of the Third Option and the Anglophone Problem, 1959-2022*.

Brief Analysis of the Federal Constitution vis-à-vis the Anglophone Problem

The manner in which the federal constitution was drafted and discussed at the Fouban Conference and later at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks laid the foundation for the Anglophone Problem which, in 2017, generated into an armed conflict. The non-participation of the SCHC and SCHA in the adoption of the draft federal constitution spelt doom for Southern Cameroons (West Cameroon). Several Articles of the constitution did not actually respond to the concept or principle of a genuine federal system. The constitution was crafted to eventually facilitate the perception of the assimilation or annexation of West Cameroon by East Cameroon. This was demonstrated by some of the articles of the constitution.

Article 5 of the Constitution, for instance, spelt out that West Cameroon's internal security was a federal subject which meant that the West Cameroon Police Force was federalized and the East Cameroon *Gendarmerie*, whose culture and *modus operandi* were strange to West Cameroonians, also operated in West Cameroon. The State of West Cameroon could not operate its own State Radio, for instance, because Information Services and Radio was a federal subject; undoctored information and its dissemination was indispensable for the survival of a healthy federal system. Article 5 also allowed the Federal President to reorganize the territorial administration of the federation and President Ahidjo signed Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961 which provided for the appointment of federal inspectors of administration.

This decree, in effect, restricted the decision-making powers of local authorities in the federated states; it restricted the autonomy of state authority vis-à-vis the federal authority; and, it was the exact antithesis of a federal system. With particular reference to West Cameroon, the appointed Federal Inspector, it was alleged, became more powerful than the Prime Minister of West Cameroon whenever the latter was in West Cameroon. Basic subjects such as public health and secondary and technical education were federal subjects (Article 6) which should have been State subjects especially because of the peculiarity of the education system (Anglo-Saxon) in West Cameroon.

The strong administrative arm of the Federal President was well stated in Articles 11 and 39 which authorized the President to nominate the Prime Minister who had to be confirmed by the appropriate Legislative Assembly. Furthermore, upon the proposal of the Prime Minister, the President appointed the Ministers and Deputy Ministers. And the President "may relieve them from office under the same conditions" (Article 39). There was no constitutional obligation on the President to nominate only a Member of Parliament or a member of the majority party in the State Legislature as Prime Minister. West Cameroon MPs in the Federal Assembly were given veto powers, Article 18 and

Article 47 (Sub-section 3), but these powers were never exercised during the life-span of the federation; the veto powers also applied to MPs from East Cameroon.

The veto powers in Article 18 applied in cases of federal laws and it provided that "... the law shall be adopted only if the [simple] majority specified in the proceeding article *comprises a majority of the votes of the deputies of each of the Federated States*" [Emphasis added]. In like manner, Article 47 stated, with regard to the revision of the constitution, that: "Any proposal for the revision of the present Constitution which impairs the unity and integrity of the Federation shall be inadmissible.... Proposals for revision shall be adopted by simple majority vote of the Members of the Federal Assembly *provided that such majority includes a majority of the representatives in the Federal Assembly of each Federated States*" [Emphasis added].

It was, however, Article 59 which clearly indicated that the two cultures were not at par as it established the primacy of the French language, and indirectly the French culture and values. Article 59 provided that "The present provisions, by which the Constitution of the Republic [of Cameroon] adopted on 21st February 1960 by the Cameroonian people is revised, shall enter into force on 1st October 1961. *The revised Constitution shall be published in French and English, the French text being authentic*" [Emphasis added]. Article 59 explained why almost all official Decrees, Orders and Decisions from the Central Authority came out only in French. Article 59 was subsequently revisited and the phrase "the French text being authentic" was deleted.

An understanding of the Anglophone Problem was complicated and compounded by the differences in the political philosophy and culture between the Anglo-Saxon philosophy and the French philosophy of governing the polity. The discourse on the Anglophone Problem was animated intellectually and politically by two Schools of Thought: one School of Thought, animated principally by French-speaking Cameroonian (Francophone) academicians and politicians, argued that there was no "Anglophone Problem."² The other School of Thought, animated by a majority of English-speaking (Anglophone) academicians, some politicians and the general Anglophone populace with a small proportion of Francophones, held that there was

² Daniel Abwa, *Ni Anglophones, Ni Francophones au Cameroun: Tous des Camerounais*. Yaoundé: n.p, 2015.

an “Anglophone Problem.”³ But after 2016, the general consensus was that there was an Anglophone Problem although it led to different interpretations.

Who is an Anglophone?

The indigenous (ethnic) peoples and their off-springs of the territory entrusted to Britain after the defeat and partition of German Kamerun are *de jure* and *de facto* Anglophones. They are Anglophones regardless of the fact that they speak English or not or grew up in the Anglo-Saxon culture. In 1951, Brigadier EJ Gibbons identified three groups of French Cameroonians resident in Southern Cameroons who, before 1961, were termed “strangers.” After 1961, these “strangers” were termed Anglophones. The first group of these “strangers,” Anglophones, were those who came to the present-day North West and South West Regions during the German Kamerun era for economic, social and military reasons and never returned permanently to their original ancestral home (see chapter one).

The children of indigenes, Francophones, from the French-speaking sector of former German Kamerun who married/marries an indigene from any part of former British Southern Cameroons formed the second group of Anglophones. When these children got/get married to indigenes from the French-speaking part of Cameroon and moved to either the North West or South West Region and bore children who grew up enmeshed in the Anglo-Saxon culture in all its dimensions, these children and their offspring form the third group of Anglophones. Anglophones, in the Cameroonian politico-cultural perspective, therefore, comprise four groups: the population of the indigenous ethnic groups who found themselves in the territory given to Britain in 1916; those whose ethnic groups are/were in the French sphere of German Kamerun in 1916 but found themselves in the British sphere as workers etc.; the children of parents from French Cameroon married to somebody from British Southern Cameroons; and, children born of parents in the British sphere whose grandparents were/are from French Cameroon.

An educated French-speaking Cameroonian (Francophone) who spoke and wrote English and imbibed the Anglo-Saxon culture but did not use it as his/her first official language or foreign-derived Anglo-Saxon culture in Cameroon did not qualify as

3 See for instance, Victor Julius Ngoh, “The Origin of the Marginalization of Former Southern Cameroonians (Anglophones), 1961-1966: An Historical Analysis,” *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. XCL, (1999); Standing Committee, *All Anglophone Conference: The Buea Declaration*. Limbe: NOOREMAC Press, 1993; and, Walter Gam Nkwil, “The Anglophone Problem,” in Victor Julius Ngoh (ed.), *Cameroon From a Federal to a Unitary State, 1961-1972: A Critical Study*. Limbe: Design House, 2004.

an Anglophone. This is because his/her first experience did not expose him/her to the Anglo-Saxon culture and values. The concept of who was an Anglophone in the Cameroonian context was also dictated by the political and/or economic “benefits” in terms of appointments in the public service or some other sinecure positions. It was not uncommon for some of those who chanted their “Anglophoneness” on rooftops in quest for appointments and/or admissions into certain institutions, which they believed were reserved for Anglophones, to question the “Anglophoneness” of other Anglophones. This was explicitly demonstrated in September 2017 when Kevin Njomo Kandem⁴, an Anglophone in all aspects, was appointed to the Normalization Committee of the Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT). A section of the Anglophone community, albeit a tiny minority, who insisted on either their North West and/or South West origin quickly complained that:

Regional balance was not respected and that Anglophones were sideline[d] in the whole set-up [because Kevin Njomo was not an Anglophone]. It would be noted that this is coming on the heels of the ongoing crisis rocking the two English-speaking regions in which Anglophones feel “cheated” in the management of national affairs.⁵

What is the Anglophone Problem?

The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon was/is, first and foremost, a minority problem; linguistic/language (Anglo-Saxon culture and values) minority as against the linguistic/language (French culture and values) majority. The Problem is/was a “clash” between the majority French culture and values and the minority Anglo-Saxon (British/English) culture and values. Unfortunately, most writers and discourses on the Anglophone Problem wrongly defined it as being the political, social, economic and linguistic marginalization of Anglophones which led them to conclude that they were relegated to

4 Kevin Njomo Kandem, a veteran Anglophone journalist whose parents hailed from the French-speaking West Region, was born in the early 1950s in Kumba. His father came to the British Southern Cameroons in the late 1930s and schooled in British Southern Cameroons; Kevin Njomo’s mother also did her primary school education in Southern Cameroons. Pa Njomo Kandem later taught in primary schools in Southern Cameroons and on retirement, he spent his last days in Kumba. Kevin Njomo did his primary education in Kumba and later moved to St. Joseph College Sasse for his secondary education and then to Nigeria for his tertiary education. The “Anglophoneness” of Kevin Njomo was indisputable but the criticism that was leveled against his appointment highlighted the plight of this group of Anglophones in Cameroon: Prof. Martin Z. Njeuma, Senior Superintendents of Police Boniface Patcha and Alphonse Mofor, Prof. Peter Y. Ntamark, Zachary Nkwo, Prof. Charles Nama, Michael Nama and Prof. Beltus Bejanga, amongst others, experienced the same fate before they died.

5 *Eden*, No. 1032, Monday, 11 September 2017, 3.

a second-class status in Cameroon.⁶ These were/are, however, the manifestations and/or consequences of the “Problem” and not the “Problem” *per se*. The Anglophone Problem was the failure of successive governments since 1961 to respect what was agreed to and explicitly elucidated by Foncha at the Fouban Constitutional Conference on Monday, 17 July 1961. As Foncha stated in Fouban:

We have kept in mind that in our desire to rebuild the Kamerun nation we must not, however, forget *the existence of the two cultures*. We have, therefore, proposed a form of government which will keep the two cultures in the areas where they now operate and to blend them in the centre. The centre is, therefore, deliberately given only very limited subjects, while the states are left to continue largely as they are now [Emphasis in original].⁷

The Anglophone Problem was/ is, therefore, the non-respect and non-application of the values and culture that Southern Cameroonians took with them into the union in 1961. It was not the marginalization of Anglophones; it was not the second-class status of Anglophones; and, it was not the non-appointment of Anglophones to head certain ministerial departments. According to David Abouem à Tchoyi⁸, the Anglophone Problem could be presented in six points:

- i. Centralized system of government;
- ii. Transfer of the decision-making centres to Yaounde;
- iii. Failure to respect commitments to equitably take into account the institutional legal and administrative cultures and traditions inherited from colonization;
- iv. Non-compliance with the solemn promises made during the May 1972 referendum campaign. As explained by Abouem à Tchoyi, Ahidjo made a commitment to Foncha and Muna in May 1972 when he addressed the National Assembly that political discourse would emphasize “the bilingual and pluricultural character of the state” and blend “the positive elements of our cultural heritage with the positive aspects of our age-old traditions”;

6 For instance, see Fanso, *Cameroon*, 385.

7 Vc/B/1961/2, Fouban Conference, NAB.

8 David Abouem à Tchoyi was, at various times, the Governor of the North West Region (then Province); the Minister of Higher Education; Secretary-General at the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon; and, later a member of the Bilingualism and Multiculturalism Commission.

- v. Change of name of the state from the “United Republic of Cameroon” to “Republic of Cameroon”; and,
- vi. The non-respect of bilingualism in the public sector⁹.

These six points can conveniently be summarized as the refusal by successive governments to allow “the two cultures... [operate] in areas where they are now [in 1961] ...and to blend them in the centre.”

Furthermore, the difference between Southern Cameroons (West Cameroon) and the other regions in Cameroon was that in the division of the Federal Republic of Cameroon into six administrative regions, according to Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961, the peculiarity of West Cameroon was recognized. The six Federal Administrative Inspectorates (Regions) were the Centre-South, West, North, East, Littoral and West Cameroon. Whereas East Cameroon was divided into five regions, West Cameroon was maintained intact as a region. In addition, the five regions of East Cameroon had one Prime Minister whereas West Cameroon, as one of the six administrative inspectorates, had its own Prime Minister.

This difference between Southern Cameroons (West Cameroon/Anglophones) and the Republic of Cameroon (East Cameroon/Francophones) was well articulated by President Ahmadou Ahidjo, one of the architects of the reunification edifice, in July 1962. In his “Statement on General Policy” at the Fourth Congress of the UC in Ebolowa from 4-8 July 1962, he clearly acknowledged the peculiarity of Southern Cameroonians (Anglophones) when he stated: “It was the Republic [of Cameroon] which had to transform itself into a federation, taking into account the return to it of a part of its territory, *a part possessing certain special characteristics*” [Emphasis added].¹⁰ No other authoritative voice could have better stated the acquired/received differences between the peoples of Southern Cameroons (Anglophones) and those of the Republic of Cameroon (Francophones) based on the differences in values, norms and administrative policies of Britain and France in their respective spheres of former German Kamerun.

Consequently, the problems experienced by the Pygmies, the Bamileke, the Duala, the Bassa, the Fulbe, the Fulani, the Beti, etc. in the other regions should not be equated as similar to those experienced by Anglophones. Of course, Anglophones did not, and

⁹ *The Rambler*, No. 0038, Thursday, 26 January 2017; *The Post*, No. 01788, Friday, 13 January 2017, 3, 6-7.

¹⁰ Ahmadou Ahidjo, “Statement on General Policy to the Ebolowa Congress of the Union Camerounaise, 4-8 July 1962” (Unpublished), 5.

do not, constitute a single ethnic group. Anglophones comprise ethnic groups such as the Bakweri, the Bakossi, the Nso (Nsaw), the Bali, the Kom, the Bafut, the Bafaw, the Balondo and the Metta. There was no denying the fact that all regions and ethnic groups in Cameroon suffered from deplorable road network, poor health facilities, inadequate educational facilities, water and electricity shortages, etc. But in addition to all these common problems and difficulties, Anglophones had a different set of “values and culture system” which make/made them different from Francophones.

It was agreed at Foumban in 1961 that the British “values and system” would operate in Southern Cameroons and the French “values and system” would operate in the Republic of Cameroon; the blending would only be done at the centre. This point was succinctly articulated in the All Anglophone Conference of 1993 in the following words: “The common values, vision and goals which we share as a people and those of our Francophone partners in the union are different and clearly cannot blend within the Framework of a Unitary State....”¹¹

Origin of the Anglophone Problem

The Anglophone Problem should be traced back to 1961 and essentially on what emerged from the Foumban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks of August 1961. Contrary to what is contained in some books on the history of Cameroon, the origin of the Anglophone Problem should not be traced back to the 1916 Picot Provisional Partition which was confirmed by the Milner-Simon Accord of 10 July 1919.¹² The origin of the “Problem” should not be traced back to 1916 because of several reasons.

Firstly, there would have been no Anglophone Problem in Cameroon if the proposed joint Anglo-French Administration (Condominium) had succeeded. Secondly, there should absolutely be no argument that there would have been no Anglophone Problem if British Southern Cameroons had achieved independence as a separate political entity in 1961 in spite of the 1916 partition. Indeed, if the initial position of the Fons and Chiefs which was “neither fire nor water” and the KUP’s platform of independence as a separate entity (“The Third Option”) had won in the 1959-1960 discussions at the UN, a separate independent Southern Cameroons would not have experienced an Anglophone Problem *per se*. Thirdly, there would have been no Anglophone Problem if the electorate in February 1961 had voted to achieve independence by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria, another Anglophone country. This argument is supported by the fact that Northern Cameroons which opted to achieve independence by joining

11 Standing Committee, *Buea Declaration*, 10.

12 See for instance, Fanso, *Cameroon*, 387.

Nigeria never complained of an Anglophone Problem in Nigeria; and, of course, Southern Cameroonians (Anglophones) would not have talked of, or complained of, an Anglophone Problem if they had voted in February 1961 to achieve independence by joining the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Finally, the failure of the political actors of the successive governments in Cameroon to implement the letter and spirit of the outcome of the Foumban Constitutional Conference and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks of 1961 was unquestionably the origin of the Anglophone Problem. When the draft constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon was adopted only by the National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon in August 1961 and it was never tabled for deliberations and adoption by the SCHC and the SCHA, it did not augur well for Southern Cameroons.¹³ There is no doubt that 1961 is the most logical and historical date to be retained as the take-off date for an analytical discussion of the origin and examination of the Anglophone Problem. A reading of Article 59 of the Federal Constitution said it all:

The present provisions, by which the Constitution of the Republic [of Cameroon] adopted on 21st February 1960 by the Cameroonian people [former French Cameroonians] is revised, *shall enter into force on 1st October 1961. The revised Constitution shall be published in French and in English, the French text being authentic* [Emphasis added].¹⁴

It should be pointed out that the change of name from the “United Republic of Cameroon” to simply the “Republic of Cameroon” in February 1984 by Law No. 84-001 of 4 February 1984 did not create the Anglophone problem. Although the Law meant, as claimed by English-speaking Cameroon political activists, the outright annexation or assimilation of former Southern Cameroons (former West Cameroon), this had been, unfortunately, in the making without most West Cameroonians, Anglophones, taking note. During the Fourth Congress of the UC at Ebolowa in July 1962, Ahidjo said that “it was the Republic [of Cameroon] which had to transform itself into a federation, *taking into account the return to it of a part of its territory*” [Emphasis added]. He went on to add that the vast majority of Southern Cameroonians wanted “to join the mother nation.”¹⁵ Earlier on 1st October 1961, Foncha, intentionally or not, said: “Southern Cameroons is free, unification is achieved; *part of the Cameroon nation is retrieved*” [Emphasis added].

13 Ngoh, *Untold Story*, 78.

14 In the late 1970s, the phrase “the French text being authentic” was subsequently deleted but the harm had been done in the sub-conscious minds of West Cameroonians (Anglophones).

15 Ahidjo, “Statement on General Policy,” 4.

In the thinking within the Biya circle prior to Law No. 84-001 of 4 February 1984, Southern Cameroons voted to achieve independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon and not a Federal Republic nor a United Republic. This was because Southern Cameroons, according to Ahidjo and his team, was part of the territory of the Republic of Cameroon and it simply returned “to it”. More explicitly, it was merely joining “the mother nation.” This obnoxious interpretation was earlier advanced, unfortunately, by Foncha in Buea on 1st October 1961 when he talked of “part of the Cameroon nation is retrieved.” Whereas Ahidjo talked of “national integration,” *national integration* had the scent and coloration of *annexation* or *assimilation* while *national unity* carried with it the existence or acknowledgement of the coming together of two or more units and the possibility of the maintenance and promotion of various diversities within the “unity.” The 1984 change of name was not the cause of the Anglophone Problem but rather one of the most important manifestations which exposed the Problem.

Most Anglophone government officials, including those holding positions in state-owned corporations and institutions, said publicly that there was no “Anglophone Problem”; privately, however, some of them recognized the existence of the “Problem.” They, however, made a belated *volte-face* when President Biya acknowledged in December 2016 that there was an Anglophone Problem. In effect, Biya said:

Let me make this very clear. It is not forbidden to voice any concerns in the Republic.... All the voices that spoke have been heard. They have, in many cases raised substantive issues that cannot be overlooked....I have enjoined the Government to engage in frank dialogue.... I urge them to participate without any bias....¹⁶

Gradually, a respectable proportion of Francophones recognized the existence of an Anglophone Problem.

The success of the union, as opined by Dr. EML Endeley in Foumban on 21 July 1961, depended “on the attitude of the Republic of Cameroon and the manner they... [treated the] proposals” agreed to by the Southern Cameroons delegation.¹⁷ Unfortunately, less than a month after the coming into being of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, President Ahidjo signed Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961 which, inadvertently, set in motion events that sowed the seeds of the Anglophone Problem that eventually degenerated into a “crisis.” The watering-down of the federal structure

16 “Head of State’s New Year Message to the Nation,” Yaounde, 31 December 2016, “www.prc.cm (accessed 12 November 2018).”

17 SCIS, Buea, *Press Release, No. 1468*, “Foumban Conference Ends in Complete Agreement on Major Issues,” 24th July 1961, 3.

and the conditionality of federalism began before the ink sanctioning the Founban Constitutional Conference and the Yaounde Tripartite Talks was dry. In fact, the British government, through Eastwood, had predicted in August 1961 at the Yaounde Tripartite Talks that "the marriage" between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons was "going to be inevitably a long and not very easy process"¹⁸ (see chapter four).

Inching into the Anglophone Crisis

On 20 October 1961, President Ahidjo signed Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961 which divided the Federal Republic of Cameroon into six Administrative Inspectorates (Regions) and Federal Inspectors were appointed to each of the regions. The Federal Inspector was responsible and accountable to the President of the Federal Republic. Although the Federal Inspector for West Cameroon, Jean Claude Ngoh, pointed out that his role was more technical than political, in West Cameroon, he was believed to be more powerful than the Prime Minister.

Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961 created immense difficulties in West Cameroon, and for West Cameroonians, because Foncha was both Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon and Prime Minister of West Cameroon. The West Cameroon government held that the Prime Minister should be the sole representative of the President in West Cameroon and the Office of the Federal Inspector of Administration should not apply in West Cameroon. As Vice-President, the West Cameroon government argued, Foncha was senior to the Federal Inspector. But Jean-Claude Ngoh, surprisingly, argued that Foncha's authority as Vice-President was limited when he was in West Cameroon as if West Cameroon was out of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. This tension greatly soured the relationship between the West Cameroon government and the federal structure. The decree greatly restricted the autonomy of West Cameroon vis-à-vis the federal authority which was less felt in East Cameroon. This was because of the differences in the two administrative systems before the birth of the federation.

The implementation of Articles 5 and 6 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon created problems between the state of West Cameroon and the federal authorities because internal and external security were federalised. For instance, Article 5 provided for the West Cameroon Police Mobile Wing to be merged with the national gendarmerie. The gendarmerie meted hitherto unknown brutal treatment to

¹⁸ Tripartite Conference, August 1961, Vc/b/1961/33, "Secret: Third Session of the Tripartite Discussions held in Yaounde on the 7th August 1961, 10:15am," File No. None [Archives Dr. No. 198, 199], NAB.

the population of West Cameroon. West Cameroonians, broadly speaking, regarded the gendarmes as an occupation force and a law unto themselves; the population of West Cameroon, consequently, did not conceal its disdain for the gendarmes. The highhandedness of the gendarmes worked to the disadvantage of federalism in Cameroon. The political class in West Cameroon did not conceal its dislike of the comportment of the gendarmes. On this score, the French Consul in Buea, Yves Robin, accused AN Jua and PM Kemcha of harbouring "autonomist tendencies" which, according to him, played into the hands of Dr. EML Endeley who was against reunification.

AN Jua was accused of separatist tendencies and as Secretary of State for Finance in West Cameroon, it was alleged that he prepared a "Separatist Manifesto" for release on the eve of the First Anniversary of Reunification on 1st October 1962.¹⁹ In another instance, security reports stated that he, Jua, showed his contempt for the Cameroon national military and the gendarmerie during the 1st October 1963 March Past Celebrations in Bamenda. He reportedly displayed unconcerned attention when the military and gendarmes marched but applauded when a detachment of the West Cameroon Police Mobile Wing marched.²⁰ Jua, according to security reports which recognised his popularity in Bamenda, did not approve of the federation and wanted an independent state of West Cameroon where he was going to be the *maître*, "master", according to security reports. Jua, it was reported, also questioned the involvement of federal authorities in the local affairs of West Cameroon and criticized the appointments of Senior Divisional Officers, *préfets*, in West Cameroon by presidential decrees.²¹

In spite of the fears which the federal government nursed against AN Jua because of his alleged anti-reunification stance, in July 1963, after a meeting in Yaounde with the Federal Minister of National Economy, Jua stated as follows:

[The] *Union Camerounaise* and the Kamerun National Democratic Party hold power in their hands and have already achieved unity in the Federal Parliament and in the Federal Government... the leaders of the two parties can unite their energies and adopt a procedure for the realization of National Unity.... Furthermore, *the leaders expect all Cameroonians to work selflessly to bring to final conclusion the great dream of all Cameroonians which is*

19 Confidentiel, Consulat de France a Buea, No. 300/DAM, Buea, le 20 octobre 1962.

20 Note de Renseignements, Compte rendu- informateurs, « Physionomie de la journée du 1^{er} octobre 1963 et divers renseignements, 3 octobre 1963.»

21 Ibid.

one prosperous and United Cameroon Nation, One People, One destiny
[Emphasis added].²²

The actions by the federal authorities in the application of Articles 5 and 6 and those of the gendarmerie sowed one of the seeds of the Anglophone grievances.

In September 1966, all the political parties in the Federal Republic of Cameroon merged and formed a single political party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU). The move towards the establishment of a one-party system of government had the full support of the KNDP of John N. Foncha, the CPNC of Dr. EML Endeley and the Cameroon United Congress (CUC) of ST Muna. The Federal Republic of Cameroon became a *de facto* one-party State. The one-party system of government did not encourage healthy political discussions and dissent and the peculiar nature of West Cameroon was gradually, but firmly, chipped away.

It was difficult to protect and project minority interests especially when it was explicitly stated, later, that “the [CNU] party defines the guide-lines of the nation’s policy. The Government implements the policy.”²³ The birth of a *de-facto* one-party state also meant that there was no constitutionally recognized institutional body, such as an opposition political party, to criticize and/or make proposals to policies announced and implemented by the CNU. Although the Federal Republic of Cameroon was still a *de-jure* multiparty polity according to Article 3 of the Constitution, it was impossible to conveniently create and run a competing political party between 1966 and 1990.

In 1972, the federation was thought, by Ahidjo and Foncha, amongst others, to have “outlived its usefulness.”²⁴ It was abrogated through a referendum essentially because Ahidjo and the political elite in East Cameroon believed that a federal system was merely transitional given that their ultimate goal was a unitary system. Foncha expressed his gratitude “to the population [of West Cameroon] for accepting the referendum proposed by Ahidjo” and warned “some members who pretended to be strong members of the CNU Party but were instead wolves in sheep skin.”²⁵

The abrogation of the federal system and the ushering in of a unitary state meant that there was neither a legislative body nor an executive body in the North West and South West Provinces (now Regions) to promote, articulate and uphold the peculiarities of

22 West Cameroon Press Release, No. 2553, 19 July 1963, NAB.

23 Cameroon Tribune (Weekly), No. 450, 2 February 1983, 1.

24 Police Special Branch: Presidential Elections/1972 Referendum Security Reports on 1970-1972, VC/1970/1 NAB.

25 Ibid.

the Anglo-Saxon values, norms and culture which were practiced in the former West Cameroon. In May 1972, West Cameroonians (Anglophones) and East Cameroonians (Francophones), in their vast majority, supported and approved the dismantling of the federal system.²⁶ However, about twenty-five years later, a reasonable proportion of the Anglophone population criticized it. The critics included some of those who had campaigned for its abrogation in 1972.

It became more and more difficult for Anglophones to survive in the Francophone milieu without the ability to wander through in French, regardless of the standard of French, while most Francophones thought it was derogatory to learn English; even to speak it in official circles and on public occasions.²⁷ Most Anglophone (West Cameroon) ministers and politicians preferred to speak in French during official events and/or meetings in French-speaking Cameroon even if it was sub-standard French. This was because they wanted to impress the French-speaking government elite who wielded political power.

The unitary system opened the flood gate for Anglophones to flock to Yaounde with appointments of positions of Vice-Ministers, Inspectors-General, Deputy Directors, Technical Advisers and *Chargés d'Etudes* in the central administration while Francophones held the reins of power and authority in the central administration. In July 1975, Paul Biya, a Francophone, was appointed Prime Minister of the United Republic of Cameroon over seasoned Anglophone politicians like Dr. EML Endeley and Achidi Achu. But Anglophones did not raise eyebrows because ST Muna, as the Speaker of the National Assembly, was the constitutional successor to the President in case of any vacancy.

The situation changed in 1979 when the constitution was amended and the Prime Minister became the successor to the President; Biya was maintained as the Prime Minister. Ahidjo was a Francophone and the Prime Minister, Biya, was a Francophone. It meant that retaining Biya as the Prime Minister, the next President would be a Francophone. This was a political slap on the Anglophones and it was perceived, and rightly so, that it signaled that Anglophones were condemned to second-class positions and the Anglo-Saxon culture and consequently any Cameroonian of Anglo-Saxon extraction could not be at the helm of the state. Since 1992, the Office of Prime Minister

26 See Victor Julius Ngoh, *Abrogation of Federalism in Cameroon, 1972: A Historical Analysis* (Limbe: Design House, 2019).

27 This disregard to learn English changed drastically after 1972 as Francophone parents started sending their children in droves to English-speaking colleges in the North West and South West Provinces/Regions (former West Cameroon/Southern Cameroons) to “harvest” the Anglo-Saxon culture and system of education.

of Cameroon was held by Anglophones: Simon Achidi Achu (April 1992-September 1996), Peter Mafany Musonge (September 1996-December 2004), Ephraim Inoni (December 2004-June 2009), Philemon Yang (June 2009-January 2019) and Joseph Dion Ngute (January 2019-). But, the Constitution no longer provided for the Prime Minister to be the constitutional successor to the President in case of vacancy or if the President was incapacitated.

This was because in January 1984, the constitution was modified and the Office of Prime Minister was abolished. The constitutional successor to the President was the Speaker of the National Assembly (ST Muna and later Lawrence Fonka Shang, both Anglophones, were Speakers). The Office of Prime Minister was re-established in April 1991 by another modification of the constitution. The modified constitution stipulated that the successor to the President of the Republic of Cameroon was the Speaker (President) of the National Assembly (Djibril Cavaye Yeguie, a Francophone, was elected Speaker) and when the Senate was put in place in 2013, according to the 1996 Constitution, the President's successor was the President of Senate (Marcel Niat Njifenji, a Francophone, was in 2013 elected President).²⁸

It should, however, be underscored that in the day-to-day political and socio-economic life of the population, the Prime Minister was much more influential than the President

28 The situation, as late as 2022, was more or less unchanged. The government, either by design or not, fuelled the Anglophone perception of marginalization and second class status. A caption on *The Guardian Post*, "Gross marginalization of Anglophones in State Protocol" in its 16 March 2020 edition threw red meat to the Anglophones as it correctly spelt out that nothing had changed since the late 1970s given that out of the nine top positions in the country, Anglophones occupied only one and it was that of the Prime Minister and Head of Government. The eight other positions namely: the President of the Republic; the President of Senate; the 1st Vice-President of Senate; the President of the National Assembly; the 1st Vice-President of the National Assembly; the President of the Constitutional Council; the President of the Economic and Social Council; and, the President of the Supreme Court were Francophones.

In a democratic system, the three branches of government are: the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary; these three branches were headed by Francophones. Although the Prime Minister was the Head of Government, the presidential system in Cameroon meant that he was sometimes, derogatorily, referred to as "The First of the Ministers" with no authoritative politico-administrative power. The Prime Minister could be dismissed by the President of the Republic at will. All the very important appointments were made by the President and important appointments by the Prime Minister had to be approved first by the President and, at times, by the Secretary-General at the Presidency. The Secretary-General, at times, gave instructions to the Prime Minister and the former was authorized by the President to sign presidential degrees on his behalf. But, the day-to-day political and socio-economic influence of the Prime Minister as it impacted on the lives of the population was more than that of the other top officials except that of the President of the Republic.

of the Senate, the Speaker of the National Assembly or the President of the Social and Economic Council. When Biya was retained as Prime Minister in 1979 with the modified constitution making the Prime Minister the constitutional successor of the President, Anglophones in the USA reacted by creating the Cameroon Action Movement in the USA (CAM-USA) in 1979 which called for "Freedom, Liberty and Sovereignty for the people, and an English-speaking State of West Cameroon."

The dismantling of the federal system subsequently aggravated the political and socio-economic distress of the English-speaking people (Anglophones) of the North West and South West Regions. The incessant condemnation of the situation of Anglophones in the union coupled with secessionist voices and calls for a return to the two-state federal system prompted Ahidjo to set up a high-level 15-member ad-hoc committee to examine the Anglophone Problem and propose recommendations. The Committee was headed by ST Muna who was the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Rapporteur was David Abouem à Tchoyi, Governor of the North West Region (then Province) with Prime Minister Biya as one of the 15 members.²⁹

The ad-hoc committee submitted its report and recommendations to President Ahidjo after one week of intensive work. On 4 November 1982, President Ahidjo abruptly resigned and he was succeeded by Prime Minister Paul Biya; the report and the recommendations of the ad-hoc committee were quietly shelved aside. Informed Cameroonians expected that Biya would implement the recommendations that the committee, in which he was a member, had proposed to his predecessor to solve the Anglophone Problem. But, it was not to be.

The degree of the awareness of the Anglophone Problem and its associated consequences were reflected by the level of agitation by Anglophone lecturers and students at the then lone University of Yaounde. It all began with the ill-fated attempt to reform the Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE) Examination. The reforms required that "a candidate for either [the GCE O'L or GCE A'L] examination must reach a certain minimum level of attainment as judged from his or her aggregate performance in a

29 The members of the ad-hoc committee were Solomon T Muna Speaker of the National Assembly and Chairperson of the Committee; Paul Biya who was Prime Minister; Ministers of State Samuel Eboua; Sadou Daoudou; Victor Ayissi Mvondo; Ministers Emmanuel Egbe Tabi, Christain Bongwa, Joseph E, Awunti, Namata Elangwe, Mrs. Dorothy L. Njeuma who was Deputy Minister of National Education; Thomas Ebongalame, CNU MP and Administrative Secretary; Samuel Kamé who was Permanent Secretary of National Defence; Jean Fochive, Director-General of CENER; Fon Fosi Yakum-Ntaw, Governor of the South West; and, David Abouem à Tchoyi, Governor of the North West and rapporteur.

specific number range of subjects in order to qualify for the award of a certificate.”³⁰ Furthermore, GCE O’L English Language (Code No. 161), French Language (Code No. 190) and Mathematics (Code No. 364) were compulsory in order to have a pass certificate at the GCE O’L. Similarly, General English Paper (Code No. 162) and French (Code No. 370) were compulsory subjects for the Arts and Humanities at the GCE A’L. Finally, a candidate who failed to obtain at least an “E” grade in all the compulsory subjects would not “qualify for a certificate at all, *except as otherwise decided by the Minister of Education*” [Emphasis added].³¹

The proposed reforms, once more, brought to the forefront the “ugly” Anglophone Problem and swift protests by Anglophone students at the University of Yaounde and secondary school students in the North West Province and, to a lesser extent, in the South West Province, let them to boycott classes. The Anglophone students and a reasonable proportion of Anglophone parents and teachers rejected the reforms because:

- i. The French sub-system of education was left untouched;
- ii. Anglophones felt that it was a hidden attempt to eradicate the Anglo-Saxon culture and education and by extension *assimilate* the Anglophones; and,
- iii. The reforms gave the Minister of Education the powers to decide who should or should not be awarded an academic end-of school certificate.

The government became jittery and ST Muna met with the leaders of the Anglophone students and, on the directives of President Biya, the reforms were suspended *sine die*.

In 1986, there was a funny twist in the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Laws and Economics, University of Yaounde, when Francophone students boycotted lectures delivered by Dr. Moses Bessong because his lectures were in English. This was at a time when at least 85% of all lectures in all Faculties at the University of Yaounde were in French, except in the Department of English; and Anglophone students burnt the midnight candle to cope with the situation.³² In May 1990, the Social Democratic

30 *Cameroon Tribune* (Weekly), No. 491, November 16, 1983, 1.

31 Ibid. The English sub-system of education took centre again in October 2018 when President Biya signed Decree No. 2018/514 of 22 October 2018 reorganizing the GCE Board. The decree drew sharp criticisms from some Anglophones especially as it left out the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea as a member of the Board of Directors although he/she was called upon to sign the GCE certificates. In March 2019, Biya signed another decree, Decree No. 2019/100 of 4 March 2019 which modified the October 2018 Decree; the new decree included, amongst other changes, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea as a member of the Board of Directors.

32 The author was a lecturer at the Department of History, University of Yaounde, at the time and

Front (SDF) was launched and most of the Anglophone lecturers and students at the University of Yaounde, in solidarity with most Anglophones throughout the country, welcomed the new political party.³³ The SDF was regarded as the vehicle to address the Anglophone Problem and its chairman, Ni John Fru Ndi, was, literally speaking, regarded as a messiah. The SDF, in its proposals to address the Anglophone Problem, called for a return to the federal structure.

The socio-political crisis which rocked Cameroon following the launching of the SDF and the labeling of Anglophones as "*les Biafras*" and "*l'ennemi est dans la maison*" was shocking and demonstrated the disregard and disrespect that some Francophones, especially high level officials of the ruling CPDM, reserved for Anglophones. Furthermore, the brutality, harassment and humiliation which Anglophone students and Anglophone teaching staff at the University of Yaounde were subjected to by the national defence and security forces, as a result of the launching of the SDF, did not leave the Anglophone teaching staff indifferent.

In a strongly worded letter to President Biya dated 30 May 1990, the Anglophone Teaching Staff of the University of Yaounde condemned the following:

- 1) The irresponsible and provocative statements directed at Anglophones by some sections of the media, the security forces and some members of government-viz. "*l'ennemi est dans la maison*" by Mr. Basil Emah;
- 2) The excessive brutality, harassment and humiliation to which the Anglophone students (especially girls) were subjected to by the security forces;
- 3) The attempts to create disunity and discord between the rest of the country and the Anglophone population; and,
- 4) The campaign of intimidation against the Anglophone population in Yaounde.³⁴

The Teaching Staff appealed to President Biya to:

witnessed the commotion that resulted from the action of the Francophone students.

33 The government initially tried to prevent the launching of the SDF on 26 May 1990. The SDF was launched in Bamenda in a tense atmosphere which eventually led to the killing of six sympathizers by the military.

34 Letter of Anglophone Teaching Staff of the University of Yaounde to His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, "An Appeal," 30th May 1990, Yaounde. This author was a teaching staff in the Department of History, University of Yaounde, at the time and participated in the drafting of the "An Appeal."

- a) Use all constitutional means to stop the country from drifting apart and disintegrating;
- b) Stop the promotion of the current anti-Anglophone sentiments in the country; and,
- c) Create a better climate for national unity in order to ensure tolerance and social harmony.³⁵

More than twenty years later, in 2016, the Anglophone Problem resurfaced with a vengeance through what was/is popularly called the Anglophone Crisis or the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West Regions.

The socio-political crisis in Cameroon from 1990 to 1993 was characterized by “Ghost Towns” and calls for “Biya Must Go” as Cameroonians demanded more political freedom and plurality of political space. This led a respectable proportion of Anglophones to call for the boycott of 20th May Celebrations. Earlier in December 1990, the Law on Associations was promulgated and it facilitated the formation of several other Anglophone political pressure groups such as the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), the Southern Cameroons Peoples Organisation (SCAPO), the Ambazonia Liberation Movement (ALIM), the Free West Cameroon Movement (FWCM), the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), the Ambazonia People’s Emancipation Council (APEC) and the Republic of Ambazonia. All these associations and movements were based abroad except for the SCNC. The SCNC was based in the North West Region with active clandestine organs in both the North West and South West Regions.

In addition to these movements, most of which were not legally authorized to operate and function in Cameroon, there were the South West Elite Association (SWELA), the North West Elite Association (NOWELA), the South West Chiefs Conference (SWECC) and the North West Fons Union (NOWEFU). The SWELA, NOWELA, SWECC and NOWEFU were legally recognized associations. In March 1992, the SDF, the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) and some other political parties boycotted the March 1992 legislative elections because the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM)-led government did not respect the terms of the Yaounde Tripartite Declaration of November 1991.³⁶ The SDF also used the boycott to highlight the marginalization of

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The Yaounde Tripartite Declaration was signed on 13 November 1990 by 40 of the 47 political parties that negotiated the “declaration;” the SDF refused to sign it at the last moment although it was one of the main participants but made a *volte-face* and refused to sign it without any convinc-

Anglophones and their perceived second class status.

The Yaounde Tripartite Declaration of November 1991 called for constitutional reforms and the Anglophone community welcomed it and held meetings in Buea in 1993 and in Bamenda in 1994 to draw up the Anglophone position regarding constitutional reforms. In April 1993, some of the socio-political cream of the Anglophone community gathered at the Mount Mary Maternity Centre, Buea, to produce the Anglophone position for the National Debate on Constitutional Reform which President Biya convened. The conference was styled the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) I. The delegates to the AAC I who were not democratically mandated declared that: the Anglophone delegation to the National Debate "shall...be bound by... [its constitutional] proposal regarding the return of Cameroon to the federal form of Government."

The AAC I resolved to preserve "the historical and cultural unity as well as the territorial integrity of Anglophone Cameroon" and "ensure the non-domination of one section of Anglophone by the other..."³⁷ It should be noted that the two prominent political pressure groups in the South West Province (now Region), the South West Elite Association (SWELA) and the South West Chiefs Conference (SWECC), did not fully participate in the organization and planning of the conference which brought to the surface the latent discord between the population of the North West and that of the South West Provinces. This subsequently led to the unpopularity of the demand "for a return to the pre-1972 two-state federal structure" in the South West Region.

Because of the displeasure of the government towards the resolutions of AAC I and thus its rejection, another Anglophone Conference, AAC II, was held in Bamenda from 29 April to 2 May 1994. In the secret resolution of AAC II, the participants decided to achieve independence through secession and rejected the call for a return to a federal structure or autonomy. The constitutional position of Anglophones was ignored in the drafting of the 1996 constitution. This was especially with regard to the secret resolution of AAC II which called for secession and independence of the two Anglophone provinces (regions). In order to increase the heat on the government, Foncha and Muna embraced the position of the SCNC which called for the independence of former Southern Cameroons. They subsequently led a delegation to the UN in New York in June 1995.

ing reason. The "Declaration" provided for the "Easing of Tension" and "Constitutional Reforms," amongst others.

37 Standing Committee, *All Anglophone Conference: The Buea Declaration* (Limbe: NOOREMAC Press, 1993) 2-4.

SCNC Delegation to the UN, June 1995

The SCNC delegation to the UN comprised Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad (Chairman of the SCNC), Hon. Foncha and Hon. Muna, amongst others.³⁸ Before leaving for New York, Foncha and Muna met with Nfon Victor E. Mukete in a fruitless attempt to get him to join their delegation to New York. Nfon Mukete, a staunch reunificationist and Paramount Chief of the Bafaw ethnic group, rejected the idea of the secession and independence of former Southern Cameroons (now the South West and North West Regions). He emphasized that he worked relentlessly for reunification and the problems experienced by Anglophones, which he acknowledged that they were genuine, could not be solved by secession and independence from the Cameroon polity.

The delegation, on its way to New York, met with officials of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London. In New York, the delegation was received by the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on 1st June 1995 on the instructions of the UN Secretary-General. The delegation also met with the UN Permanent Representatives of the UK, the USA, Germany, Nigeria, Australia and Canada, amongst others. The overall purpose of the visit to the UN was “to underscore... [the] historic character” [of Southern Cameroons].³⁹ The delegation explained that the position of Southern Cameroons at the July 1961 Foumban Constitutional Conference was “badly weakened by the fact that, unlike la Republique du Cameroun, it [Southern Cameroons] was not yet a sovereign state with membership of the United Nations.”⁴⁰

In its meeting with UN officials, the SCNC delegation demanded the following:

The termination of the process of annexation by La Republique du Cameroon [Cameroun] because we are still legally a UN Trust Territory.... The people of the Southern Cameroons also demand that the United Nations and the United Kingdom now help complete the process of self-determination and full sovereignty in accordance with the Trusteeship Agreement and

38 The SCNC delegation was composed of Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad, Hon. John N. gu Foncha, Hon. Solomon T. Muna, Dr. Simon Munzu, Dr. Arnold Yongbang, Ambassador Martin Ekwoke Epie, Ambassador Henry Fossung, Justice AT Mbu and Mola Njoh Litumbe.

39 The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), *The London Communiqué* (London: n.p., 1995), 2.

40 Ibid.

It was definitely baffling to UN officials to hear Hon. Foncha and Hon. Muna, who had been at various periods in the history of the Federal Republic of Cameroon the Vice-President of the country and also Prime Minister of West Cameroon, claiming that the North West and South West Provinces were, in 1995, "still legally a UN Trust Territory." This was the more embarrassing because the UN Trusteeship Council had ceased or suspended all its activities in November 1994.

After meeting with UN officials, the delegation visited several cities in the US where the Anglophone population reserved the members a hilarious reception: New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis and Los Angeles in the US and London in the UK. Anglophones in the diaspora, according to the delegation, responded very favourably "both morally and financially." Anglophones in these cities prodded the SCNC delegation "to pursue the initiated process of the restoration of the statehood of Southern Cameroons with unflinching determination."⁴² Foncha and his delegation also participated at "the First All Anglophone Conference" which held in Washington, D.C. from 1-3 June 1995. The central theme of the conference was the independence of former Southern Cameroons.

The conference, however, ended without producing the promised fruits.⁴³ The Anglophones who urged the SCNC to pursue the "restoration of the statehood of the Southern Cameroons" either failed or refused to acknowledge that Southern Cameroons was not a sovereign state before attaining independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon. Consequently, the SCNC delegation could not have been expected to demand the "restoration" of statehood and independence which it did not have before 1st October 1961.

On their return from New York, some excited Anglophones received the delegation at the Mungo Reunification Bridge. The delegation gleefully unfolded a large UN flag in an unmistakable sign of *Mission Accomplie*. As Mbile explained, the delegation went to the UN "in search" of their "objective of a Southern Cameroons independent state ... [and returned] with a flag claiming ... to have been given them at the United Nations."⁴⁴ Mbile went on to lament the fact that these "young people ... were being told strange

41 Ibid., 11.

42 Ibid., 12.

43 The other members of Foncha's delegation were Hon. S.T. Muna, former Ambassadors Henry Fossung and Martin Epie, Justice A.T. Mbu, Dr. Simon Munzu, Mola Njoh Litumbe and Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad who was the Chairman of the SCNC.

44 Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 350.

tales, and made to entertain false hopes and dreams.”⁴⁵ But, the Cameroon government failed to read the handwriting on the wall and also failed to address the pertinent issues which were raised and discussed at the conference.

One of the political events or celebrations which Anglophone activists decried was the annual 20th May Celebrations which they interpreted as an *annexation*. A responsible number of Anglophone activists campaigned for the boycott of 20th May Festivities. For instance, the 20th May 1994 celebrations were condemned and the “march past” described as a “Mourning Day” by *Cameroon Post*. According to the newspaper, “we [Anglophones] shall not join in the festivities that celebrate the theft of our nation, the enslavement of our people ... [it] is a day of shame for all Anglophones.”⁴⁶ Political parties like the SDF used the threat to boycott 20th May celebrations to extract some cosmetic political concessions from the CPDM-led government. It was in this atmosphere that some SCNC militants stormed the CRTV Provincial Station in Buea in December 1999.

Extremist SCNC Position of Secession, December 1999

The extremist position of secession and independence was brought forcefully to the public in December 1999 when on the night of 30 December 1999, about nine SCNC militants stormed the CRTV Provincial Station in Buea at about 11:50 pm. They deceived and over-powered the lone police officer on duty. The SCNC proclaimed the secession and independence of the North West and South West Provinces (now Regions). In a statement by Justice Ebong Frederick Alobwede⁴⁷, Chairman of the SCNC Strategic Committee, the SCNC stated: “We, the people of the former British Southern Cameroons, officially declare our independence from the Republic of Cameroon.” But, the statement did not go on the air. On 31 December 1999, Henry Fossung, the National

45 Ibid.

46 *Cameroon post*, No. 219, 19-26 May 1994.

47 Frederick Ebong Alobwede (born in September 1945 and died in May 2019 in the US) schooled in the Roman Catholic Mission, Small Soppo Buea from 1953 to 1961. He later went to the Soviet Union and gained admission into Moscow State University. He eventually moved to the Russian Kiev State University and graduated with a Degree in Law. He returned to Cameroon and in 1973, he was admitted into the prestigious School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM) and graduated in 1975 as a Magistrate. In December 1999, as a staunch member of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), Justice Ebong Alobwede matched words with action as he declared the independence of the North West and South West Provinces. He resigned from the public civil service in 2000 and in April 2000, he was elected Chairman of the SCNC and first Head of State of his declared Federal Republic of Southern Cameroons. In 2000, he took his entire family to Nigeria from where the US government facilitated his movement, and that of his family, from Nigeria to the US in 2006. In 2011, he became a US citizen.

Chairman of the SCNC, released an eight-page Address in which he stated that the annexation of Southern Cameroons by the Republic of Cameroon led the former to regress “morally, educationally, politically, economically, and socio-culturally.

By fraud, numerous manipulations and fraudulent misrepresentations, we have lost everything.”⁴⁸

Justice Ebong Alobwede and some SCNC militants went further and hoisted the SCNC flag at the Community Field, Limbe. President Biya and the Government led by Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge failed to address the causes of the grave incident, much less acknowledge them. Meanwhile, Anglophone activists in the diaspora mobilized financial and human resources to forcibly achieve independence for the North West and South West Regions. Some of the secessionists, especially those in the diaspora, went to the extent of mortgaging the natural resources found in the North West and South West Regions.

Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd. Signed Exploration Rights

The extremists who rejected dialogue and opted for secession knew that it could only be achieved through violent and unconstitutional means. This was especially so, according to them, because the government failed to address the grievances expressed by the Anglophones. They, therefore, needed funding to make available a viable war-fighting machine: human, financial and material resources. On 1 November 2012, a secret agreement was signed between a Canadian private company, Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd., and a clandestine Southern Cameroons Government. According to a statement by Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd.:

Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd... is pleased to announce that on 1st November 2012, it signed a formal Oil & Mineral Right Assignment Agreement with the Government of the Southern Cameroons. The region contains known petroleum reserves....The Assignment Agreement grants exclusive right and covers an area of approximately 43,000 square Kilometers including... the Bakassi peninsula and future offshore right.⁴⁹

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd., Rashid Zulfikar, stated that, in return for the oil and mineral rights, the company “recognizes and supports the aspirations of the Southern Cameroon people in their quest for self-determination...

48 *The Post*, No. 0153, Monday, 10 January 2000, 3.

49 Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd, info@Kilimanjaro-capital.ca

we look forward ... to achieve an acceptable solution under the guidance of the United Nations and African Union.”⁵⁰

On 29 January 2013, Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd. further reported that: “It signed an agreement with Forest Gate Energy Inc. granting... [it] a 20% stake in the future oil and mineral development of the Southern Cameroons.” It added that the “regions contain known petroleum reserves and significant untapped opportunities for gold, diamond, iron, bauxite and manganese exploration.”⁵¹ The CEO went on to announce the appointment of a Cameroonian (an Anglophone), Ebenezer Akwanga, as a member on the Advisory Board of Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd.⁵² Meanwhile, there were disturbing signs that all was not well within the English Sub-system of education in Cameroon.

The drift towards a hardened stance in support of the English Sub-system of education began on 6 May 2015 when the Minister of Higher Education, Prof, Jacques Fame Ndongo, convened a meeting in Yaounde to discuss the harmonization of the two systems of education in the higher education sector in Cameroon. The aim was, according to the Ministry, to ease the mobility of students. It was, amongst others, proposed that Common Law should be suppressed in the undergraduate law degree programme. Together with the proposal to harmonize the political science programme, informed Anglophones concluded that it was a subtle attempt to obliterate the English Sub-system of education in favour of the French Sub-system. Minister Jacques Fame Ndongo was informed accordingly in no uncertain terms of the apprehension of the Anglophones.⁵³ Most of the other academic disciplines like History, for example, did not raise any serious problem.

Fruitless Meetings, Supplications and Outburst of the Crisis

On 9 May 2015, some 700 Common Law lawyers from the North West and South

50 Ibid.

51 Kilimanjaro Capital Ltd, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Market wire, 30 January 2013, www.marketwired.com/press-release/Kilimanjaro-capital-Ltd-signs-oil-mineral-development-contract-with-forest-gate-energy-175103.htm (accessed 20 June 2018).

52 Ibid. Ebenezer Akwanga lives in North America as a US citizen.

53 This author was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in-charge of Academic Affairs at the University of Bamenda from February 2014 to November 2015. He was transferred from the University of Bamenda in 2017.

West Regions and other Regions met in Bamenda and, amongst others, accused the government of:

...[a] deliberate and well-planned programme of whittling away and replacing the Common Law-inspired rules of Criminal, Civil procedure, and of Evidence, with a system and culture of French-inspired or copied Civil Law and [we] strongly and unequivocally reject this ... and [we] demand the restoration of the referred Common Law-inspired Rules of practice and procedure⁵⁴.

The lawyers demanded that: the divisions of Common Law and Civil Law should be clearly defined and should operate side-by-side in the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature* (ENAM), Advanced School of Administration and Magistracy; the non-adulteration of the educational sub-system in the North West and South West Regions; the creation of a Law School; and, the protection of the Anglophone minority. In their resolutions, the lawyers also stated that "the State should exercise its Constitutional duty to protect the Anglophone minority..., protect our history, heritage, education and cultural values" and [they] "*strongly demand [ed] a Federation*" [Emphasis added]. The Common Law lawyers finally gave the government "a reasonable period from the date of deposit of these resolutions... to react positively...."⁵⁵ The government, unfortunately, dilly-dallied. The agitations did not only come from the Common Law lawyers' association but also from Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions with Wilfred Tassang who, as the President of the Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Trade Union (CATTU), was the principal spokesperson.

On the night of 23 December 2015, the Minister of Higher Education, Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo, and the Governor of the North West Region, Adolph Lele Afrique Tchoffo, met with Wilfred Tassang; Valentine Semma; and, Valentine Tameh⁵⁶ at the Ayaba Hotel in Bamenda. Their discussion centred on the marginalization of Anglophones in the country. Unfortunately, both sides held firm to their previous positions, and Minister Jacques Fame Ndongo was convinced that the Teachers' Trade Unions wanted to amend the constitution. The recruitment of French-speaking teachers and admission of French-speaking student-teachers into the Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) and Higher Technical Teacher Training College (HTTTC) of the University of Bamenda on internship with very poor knowledge of both written

54 "Resolutions Made at the Inaugural All Cameroon Common Lawyers' Conference," Bamenda, 9 May 2015; *The Post*, No. 01849, Monday, 04 September 2017, 3.

55 Ibid.

56 Wilfred Tassang was the National Executive Secretary-General of the Cameroon Anglophone Teachers' Trade Union (CATTU), Valentine Semma was the Acting President of CATTU and Valentine Tameh was of the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC).

and spoken English to teach in Anglophone schools and colleges was the bone of contention, amongst others. Minister Jacques Fame Ndongo advanced the bilingual nature of Cameroon which was enshrined in the constitution and intimated that every teacher was free to teach in either English or French.⁵⁷

Even in relation to the University of Bamenda and the University of Buea where, in some cases, Francophones with little knowledge of acceptable English were appointed to high administrative positions, the Minister “failed” to understand that, according to the Presidential Decrees which created these universities on the Anglo-Saxon tradition and model, all academic activities in these universities used English as the medium of academic communication: lectures, examination questions and answers, conferences and seminars, etc. The exception was, of course, in those Departments which offered programmes/degrees in foreign languages such as French, German and Spanish.

After the failure of the meeting of 23 December 2015, Governor Lele convened another crisis meeting with Tassang and his team on 31 December 2015 in his Bamenda Up-Station Office. But, the expected positive results did not materialize and another meeting was slated for 2 January 2016 in Bamenda. At the 2 January 2016 meeting which was also attended by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bamenda (UBa), Prof. Therese Nkuo Akenji, and the Directors of HTTC and HTTTC, the UBa authorities failed to satisfactorily address the worries of Tassang and his team.

Another meeting was, therefore, scheduled for 4 January 2016 in Yaounde jointly chaired by the Minister of Higher Education and the Minister of Secondary Education. The meeting, once more, took up the burning issue of Francophone students in professional schools in the English sub-System of Education and Francophone teachers who were teaching with poor mastery of English language in Anglophone schools. But, both parties did not agree on the immediate implementation of the position of the Teachers’ Trade Unions: no French-speaking teacher with poor knowledge of English language should be sent to teach in English-speaking schools except he/she was to teach French; and, Francophone students should not be admitted into professional schools in the English sub-System of Education. In spite of the “envelopes”, bribe money, which were allegedly dished out to the representatives of the Teachers’ Trade Unions, the latter refused to accept the position of the government which wanted, in a subtle manner, to maintain the status quo. In February 2016, the Cameroon Education Forum (CEF)

57 This author was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in-charge of Academic Affairs at the University of Bamenda from February 2014 to November 2015 when he was replaced. But, he stayed on as professor of history until late 2017. He followed very keenly the behind-the scene meetings in Bamenda. This point was repeated during a telephone conversation this author had with Prof. Jacques Fame Ndongo, Minister of Higher Education, on 3 January 2017.

entered the fray and drew the attention of the government to the plight of the English sub-System of Education in Cameroon.

In a memorandum to Prime Minister Philemon Yang, the CEF lamented that about 20 years since the ordinance on education was signed:

Its provisions have been consistently violated, neglected, or only partly and partially implemented, thus giving reasons for suspicion of bad faith by Education Authorities in our country [Cameroon]... [CEF called for the reduction in] Government meddling and political interference in the management of education to allow for academic autonomy, competence and scholarship....⁵⁸

The CEF also decried the non-appointment of an Anglophone as Minister of Education and demanded that “The Ministries of Education should be reorganized to reflect the bi-cultural nature of the country.”⁵⁹ The inaction of the government to the lawyers’ demands of May 2015 led them to call for a four-day strike action from 11-14 October 2016. Later in October 2016, SYNES/UB issued a communiqué stating:

We, Teachers of Higher Education endorse the Common Law lawyers’ *action as a genuine expression of the continual frustration Anglophones have lived throughout this tiresome union*. Their action mirrors their revulsion against the ... culture genocide... We call on All Cameroonians to support the lawyers’ quest for equality for the good of our country [Emphasis in original].⁶⁰

It should be noted that while SYNES/UB supported the strike called by the Common Law lawyers, SYNES/UBa largely ignored it. The failure of the government to adequately address the Anglophone Problem with its multifaceted ramifications allowed Anglophones to devise various means to put the “Problem” on the conversation table.

The fire which led to the crisis that erupted in November 2016 was lit during a seminar entitled “The Reform of Higher Education Curriculum for Quality and Efficiency” which was organized by the HTTC of the University of Bamenda; it held in the Asanji Hall of the University. The seminar ran from 16-18 May 2016 and the hidden agenda was to articulate some of the frustrations which the Director of HTTC, Prof. Augustine

58 *The Post*, No. 01703, Monday, 22 February 2016, 2.

59 *Ibid.* In 2018, President Biya appointed Anglophones to the positions of Minister of Secondary Education, Minister of Territorial Administration and Secretary of State for Basic Education. But these appointments did not address the cause of the Anglophone Problem.

60 *The Post*, No. 01771, Monday, 31 October 2016, 7.

Nsamenang Bame, could not do as a government representative at HTTC. He had earlier received a query from the Ministry of Higher Education in relation to the situation of Francophone lecturers and students in HTTC. The query highlighted what he felt he was going through as Director of HTTC whereas, at the same time, some Anglophone parents and the leaders of Teachers' Trade Unions felt that he and the Director of HTTC systematically robbed their children of privileged access into the two teacher training colleges at the University of Bamenda: the HTTC and the HTTTC.

The seminar was aimed at evaluating the perceptions of stakeholders and the responses of training teachers in the English Sub-system of Education. The participants included secondary school teachers, principals, educational delegates in the North West Region and teachers' trade union leaders. It should be underscored that most of the secondary school teachers, educational delegates and principals in the South West Region did not participate in the seminar. Yet, the outcome of the underbelly discussions and resolutions from the seminar impacted enormously on the serenity of the socio-political life of the South West Region, the two Anglophone regions and Cameroon in general as from November 2016. It was a technical assessment seminar with political underpinnings. A recommendation on the safeguarding of the English Sub-system of Education featured amongst the recommendations after a critical discourse by Tassang.

A senator who was invited to the seminar promised to take the complaints directly to the President of the Republic.⁶¹ After the seminar, the trade unions started nursing ideas on the articulation of the problems of Anglo-Saxon education in Cameroon especially after the failure of the series of meetings they had held with the Minister of Higher Education and the Minister of Secondary Education. The latent discontent of Anglophone teachers and parents was aggravated when Francophone student-teachers at HTTC and HTTTC were generally sent on their teaching practice to Anglophone secondary schools in Mezam Division. Most of the Francophone HTTC and HTTTC student-teachers had a poor mastery of English language but, this was only the tip of the iceberg. The authorities of HTTC refused to send these student-teachers to Francophone secondary schools in nearby Dschang, Mbouda and/or Bafoussam.⁶² The failure of the meetings of 23 December 2015, 31 December 2015, 2 January 2016 and 4 January 2016 was not lost on Tassang and his team during the 16-18 May 2016 Seminar

61 Discussions with some HTTC lecturers who attended the seminar and a University of Bamenda lecturer with an administrative post to whom Prof. Nsamenang Bame confided his inner thoughts, 4 June 2020.

62 This author, as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Bamenda from February 2014 to November 2015, tried unsuccessfully to get the Director of HTTC to send HTTC student-teachers for their internship to secondary schools in the towns mentioned. In 2017, this author was transferred from the University of Bamenda at his request.

in UBa.

On 22 June 2016, the Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions and the Anglophone Common Law Lawyers Conference sent a seven-page memorandum to the Prime Minister and Head of Government. In the memorandum, they articulated the issues which were raised at the May 2016 seminar at the University of Bamenda. They accused the Minister of Higher Education of "a sinister plot" to "rid Anglophones in Cameroon of the meager chances they ever had to get jobs after school, or enjoy their identity."⁶³ The petitioners of the memorandum went on to decry the fact that "the Ministry of Higher Education... jettisoned the concept of excellence in favour of a more mediocre unnamed concept which... [gives] rise to fearless corruption and injustice."

The petitioners also condemned the "marginalization machinery in competitive entrance examinations" into professional schools where "For the most part, the lists are mutilated because those involved in the organization of examinations and compilation process attest that the names sent to MINESUP are never the same names which come back." Furthermore, they lamented that Anglophone children were "sufficiently traumatized by the system put in place at MINESUP"

In order to buttress the argument of the maltreatment of Anglophones, the petitioners pointed out that in 2011, "Out of about 1,000 lecturers recruited by the MINESUP, less than 100 were Anglophone[s]." Finally, the petitioners rejected the appointments of Francophones as Deputy Vice-Chancellors in-charge of Academic Affairs in the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda which were fashioned and administered on the Anglo-Saxon tradition. According to them, this was aimed at completing the "heinous design" of the Minister of Higher Education. In their opinion, these "plots and evil designs" made "Anglophones to genuinely feel that **Cameroon is an institutionalized conspiracy to degrade and wipe out the identity of Anglophones**" [Emphasis in original].⁶⁴ On 26 October 2016, the Teachers' Trade Unions declared an indefinite strike action. The strike action called for the boycott of teaching in the North West and South West Regions with effect from 21 November 2016. In the "Strike

63 Except otherwise stated, the citations relating to the Memorandum are from "Memorandum: The Prime Minister and Head of Government, Republic of Cameroon," Wednesday, 22 June 2016, Bamenda. The memorandum was signed by: James Arrey Abangma (SYNES-UB), Tameh Valentine Nfon (TAC), Amuntung Joseph Tumasang (UPTA), Kimfon Michael Yufenyuy (CEWOTU), Tassang Wilfred Fombang (CATTU), Afuh Stephen Kwah (PEATTU), Ayeah Emmanuel K. Ngam (BATTUC) and Bobga Harmony (Anglophone Cameroon Law Lawyers Conference. Copies of the memorandum were sent to the President of the Republic; the President of Senate; the President of the National Assembly; and, to Diplomatic Missions in Cameroon.

64 "Memorandum: The Prime Minister."

Notification,” the Teachers’ Trade Unions stated:

In the last ten months, we have made known our feelings about the way the Anglophone sub-system of education is being treated in our country, and relentlessly pursued our quest for justice and fairness to Anglophones as a cultural group.... All our efforts, having yielded no fruits, now saddle us with no choice but to recourse to an industrial action on 21 November 20016 [2016]. It is needless to mention that we have been compelled by Government insensitivity to embark on this last option available in negotiation.⁶⁵

Earlier, on 6 October 2016, the Cameroon Common Law Lawyers Association had informed the government that “After carefully reviewing the attitude of the Government towards all complaints... as manifest in the OHADA Legislation, the Insurance Legislation (CODE CIMA) and virtually any other piece of legislation since 1972,” it had given “notice [to its members] that from Tuesday, 11th of October 2016 to the 14th of October 2016, all lawyers of our above association shall have a sit-down strike from all court actions.”⁶⁶ On 15 October 2016, the Fako Lawyers’ Association (FAKLA), the Meme Lawyers’ Association (MELA), the Manyu Lawyers’ Association (MALA) and the North West Lawyers’ Association (NOWELA) issued a joint communiqué stating:

We shall be synergizing with SYNES, Cameroon Teachers’ Trade Union (CATTU), Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC), Traders Associations, Taxi Drivers Unions, Bus Companies and Commercial Motorbikes Riders Associations, as well as “Buyam Sellam” Associations across the North West and South West Regions.⁶⁷

In supporting the lawyers’ strike action, Tassang said: “The fight at hand is not a teacher fight. If it were, it would be talking living and working conditions. This is an Anglophone struggle.... This is the time for us to rise up as one.”⁶⁸ Tassang’s statement was very revealing because it exposed the crux of the problem: it was a political issue and not the resolution of corporate grievances. The government woefully failed to read the real intention behind Tassang’s statement. The statement reflected the atmosphere which reigned during the 16-18 May 2016 Seminar in UBa. The government, unfortunately,

65 Kashim I. Tala and Kingsley L. Ngange (eds.), *Anglophone Lawyers and Teachers Strikes in Cameroon (2016-2017): A Multidimensional Perspective* (Yaounde: Les Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2019), 268.

66 Ibid., 267.

67 *Eden*, No. 988, Monday, 17 October 2016, 3.

68 *The Post*, No. 01771, Monday, 31 October 2016, 7.

"downplayed" the lawyers' strike action despite the fact that it was well respected.

On 6 November 2016, the Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions finally issued a communiqué which declared an indefinite strike action. It stated that the strike action would start on 21 November 2016. This was in spite of the heterogeneous nature of the composition of the Teachers' Trade Unions. It should be underscored that before the release of the communiqué, the Teachers' Trade Unions had informed the most senior religious leaders in the North West and South West Regions: the Archbishop of Bamenda, the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), the Executive President of the Cameroon Baptist Convention and the Imams of the Bamenda and Buea Central Mosques. The various associations of traditional rulers in the North West and South West Regions were also informed. The religious leaders and the traditional rulers reportedly nodded their approval.

The teachers adopted a course of action which was doomed to fail because the teachers were employed by different employers with different reasons for running an educational institution. The first group of teachers comprised those employed by the government. The government had the cardinal responsibility to educate its citizens and the teachers were either civil servants or contract officers whose salaries/wages were more secured than teachers under other employers. The second group of teachers comprised those employed by mission bodies or religious bodies such as the Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist missions. Although these mission bodies saw their educational institutions as one of the means of evangelization, they depended almost exclusively on school/tuition fees to pay their teachers' salaries/wages. The meager subvention from the state, which was very difficult to get, was a drop in a basin of water as far as addressing the financial needs of mission bodies was concerned; an indefinite strike action meant that parents/guardians would eventually not have their children in schools and consequently would not pay school/tuition fees for their children. The end-result would be that the mission bodies would be unable to pay their teachers' salaries/wages.

The third group consisted of teachers employed by authorities of schools and colleges whose proprietors were businessmen and women and their prime reason for operating an educational institution was business which must be profitable. They were, therefore, not prepared to pay their employees (teachers) when the latter were not teaching. Finally, the strike action by the teachers was doomed to fail because the Teachers' Trade Unions did not have any fund to provide for the financial needs of their members in case their employers stopped paying their salaries/wages. It was in this atmosphere of unpreparedness that the lawyers and the Teachers' Trade Unions decided to solicit support from the population without having schooled the various sectors on the end-game and from whom they should take instructions.

Mancho Bibixy, a radio animator in Bamenda, for instance, seized the opportunity and launched his “Coffin Revolution.” He carried a white coffin in his car and drove to the Bamenda City Council premises accompanied by a large chanting crowd protesting against the following:

- i. The dirty nature of the Bamenda City Council;
- ii. The dilapidated road network; and,
- iii. The slow advancement of the water project in Bamenda.

The grievances posed by Mancho Bibixy had nothing to do with the corporate grievances of the lawyers and teachers. The grievances had nothing to do with the Anglophone Problem as Anglophones believed the “problem” was caused by the Ahidjo and Biya regimes. The protest marches degenerated and became violent as the forces of law and order became engaged in running confrontations with the protesters. The confrontations led to hundreds of protesters wounded; some were killed; some were arrested and detained in Bamenda; and, others were whisked off to the Yaounde Kondengui Maximum Security Prison.

After a couple of very difficult weeks and months, public and private teachers of schools and colleges returned to the classrooms. The Anglophone Common Law lawyers had earlier resumed work. But, not after their strike action had been hijacked by hoodlums. The teachers and students/pupils became prime targets for abductions in exchange for ransom. These hoodlums were subsequently armed by Anglophone activists in Cameroon and in the diaspora. Monday was subsequently declared “ghost town” in the North West and South West Regions during which no activity was tolerated; be it economic, political, cultural or social. In order to enforce the call for school boycott, some teachers and students/pupils were brutally attacked and killed by the armed hoodlums who started calling for the “restoration” of the independence of the North West and South West Regions (former Southern Cameroons) as directed by their financiers and sponsors in the diaspora. The buildings of some colleges/schools were set ablaze by the outlaws as they attempted to enforce the school boycott.

Government Reaction

The government misjudged the gravity and popularity of the strike action especially the call by the Teachers’ Trade Unions for an indefinite strike action and boycott of teaching. Speaking on CRTV, Atanga Nji, then Minister of Special Duties at the Presidency⁶⁹, provided the much-sought opportunity by Anglophone activists to accuse him of not

69 Paul Atanga Nji was promoted to the powerful post of Minister of Territorial Administration in a cabinet reshuffle on 2 March 2018 by President Biya.

representing the interests of Anglophones when he said that there was no Anglophone Problem. In fact, Minister Atanga Nji said, with reference to the Anglophone Problem, that: "I said it yesterday; I am saying it today; I will say it tomorrow. There is no Anglophone Problem in Cameroon and I have given facts to justify what I say."⁷⁰

When it was alluded to him during the same interview on CRTV that the Anglophone Problem was the marginalization of Anglophones as exemplified by the non-appointment of Anglophones to head very important ministerial departments, he cited some important ministerial departments headed by Anglophones. He went on to say that "Anglophones should not be complaining because the Prime Minister post has been occupied by them for the past 25 years; [and] Anglophones headed three State Universities in Cameroon." Furthermore, he stated that there were proofs "that some of the striking teachers and lawyers collected bribe from some individuals abroad to destabilize ... [Cameroon]."⁷¹

The non-appointment of Anglophones to head certain ministerial departments as being the Anglophone Problem was rubbished in 2018 when Anglophones were appointed to head the all-powerful Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Ministry of Secondary Education and an Anglophone was appointed to the post of Prime Minister. After the appointment of Atanga Nji as Minister of Territorial Administration in 2018, he said: "Anglophones should never say the president has given nothing to them. The head of state is an extraordinary man. He has always favoured the Anglophones."⁷² His statement drew quick negative reactions from some Anglophones who said: "Nobody is asking for preferential treatment, only justice and fairness."⁷³

Earlier on 2 December 2016, Hon. Joseph Wirba of the SDF had thundered from the rostrum in the National Assembly as he felt that he was not accorded enough time to address what, to him, was very important to the people of the North West and South West Regions. From the rostrum, he said that the laws of Cameroon were:

Unjust to my people [Anglophones], we will resist you [Francophones]

70 <https://youtu.be/OhIQEND-7W8>

71 *The Post*, No. 01849, Monday, 04 September 2017. The statement by Atanga Nji on money coming from abroad to finance the strike and destabilize the country turned out to be very correct because, as events unfolded, finances poured in from the diaspora to fund the strike and the activities of the armed secessionists. Generous contributions were solicited from supporters and sympathizers of the cause of the independence of the North West and South West Regions under the theme: "My Trip To Buea" (MTTB).

72 MimiMefolInfo

73 Ibid.

to the last man.... I am talking about the enslavement of my people and you [Mr. Speaker] are talking about time? Mr. Speaker, I will not leave this rostrum until I say this because our people [Anglophones] mean nothing to you in this union.⁷⁴

Wirba became a short-lived instant hero to the majority of disgruntled Anglophones.

As the second term of classes for the 2016/2017 academic year approached, the government made frantic efforts to ensure that classes should resume on 7 January 2017. Before a 27 December 2016 meeting in Bamenda, the atmosphere was rife with whispers of government attempts to corrupt trade union leaders but more especially Tassang. This prompted him to assure the Anglophone public on 22 December 2016 that: "I am incorruptible. No amount of money can buy my conscience. As we speak..., the government has packaged a very special envelope for my person...."⁷⁵ In a concerted effort to thwart the government effort, the leaders of the strike action who had formed an umbrella organization called the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium (CACSC) met and declared "ghost towns" in the North West and South West Regions.

The "ghost towns" were eventually limited to Mondays. In creating the CACSC, the members stated that "a return to a two-state Federation as was envisaged in 1961 pursuant to resolution 1608 of the United Nations General Assembly is the best guarantee of the protection, promotion and preservation of Anglophone rights...."⁷⁶ In a defiant mood, Tassang declared: "we will know if the [government in] Yaounde controls West Cameroon or we control our people if we don't see this Government crippling on its knees on Monday, 7 January [2017]."⁷⁷ In another desperate attempt to salvage the 2016/2017 academic year and also call off the strike action, the Ghogomu Ad-hoc Committee met again in Bamenda from 12 to 13 January 2017. The meeting failed as violence erupted on the night of Friday, 13 January 2017, and the expected communiqué calling off the strike never materialized. Instead, a strongly worded defiant communiqué from the CACSC, also called simply as the Consortium, was issued on Saturday, 14 January 2017 stating:

Our people are determined to peacefully resist the sadistic military occupation which has continued unabated for half a century.... [And] while

⁷⁴ *The Post*, No. 01849, 7. Hon. Wirba was the SDF Member of Parliament from Jakiri in the North West Region. He later escaped to the UK, after the June 2017 parliamentary session, where he sought asylum

⁷⁵ Cameroon-Info.Net, 23 December 2016

⁷⁶ Tala and Ngange, *Anglophone Lawyers and Teachers*, 273.

⁷⁷ *The Post*, No. 01849, 5.

the teachers were preparing to educate the public on the discussions and resolutions today 14th January, elements of the police and gendarmes went on rampage at about midnight yesterday.⁷⁸

On Friday night, 13 January 2017, violence erupted because the population of Bamenda was misled into believing that the delegations of lawyers and teachers were held hostage and forced to accept certain resolutions. John Fru Ndi of the SDF and Ben Muna of the Alliance for Progress (AFP) rushed to the meeting hall in Up-Station Bamenda and saw that it was a deliberate misinformation. But, the harm had already been done because an angry mob took to the streets. The meeting grounds at Up-Station Bamenda were “invaded” by taxi drivers, motorbike riders, unemployed youth, some disgruntled Anglophones and some well-intentioned Anglophones.

This led to violent and deadly confrontations between the forces of law and order and the population in Down-Town Bamenda. The initial corporate grievances were gradually superseded by politico-constitutional grievances and it became clear that a strong community of Anglophones in the diaspora teleguided and financed the stance of the arguments of the delegations of the teachers and lawyers. The demands by the teachers and lawyers took a definite political dimension when they demanded a referendum “without further delay” on a return to the pre-1972 two-state federal structure and also called for a continuation of the strike action.

Position of the Churches

The churches in Cameroon took a very keen interest in the crisis which unfolded in the North West and South West Regions. This was especially so with the main religious bodies: the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) and Islam. These churches, especially the Catholic Church, controlled an enormous percentage of educational institutions in the two regions from the primary to the tertiary level compared to the other religious denominations. When the crisis began in October 2016 with the lawyers’ strike and the teachers followed in November 2016, the Catholic Church foresaw the dangers of dilly-dallying and sent a Memorandum to the President of the Republic in December 2016.

In the Memorandum dated 22 December 2016, the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province reviewed the genesis of the Anglophone Crisis. They expressed the readiness of the Catholic Church to play a role in resolving the crisis; unfortunately,

⁷⁸ *Eden*, No.1001, Monday, 16 January 2017, 5.

the government never replied to the Bishops' Memorandum.⁷⁹ The mounting crisis, with its associated violence, compelled the Bishops to make-known, publicly, their pre-occupation and the actions they had taken. The government accused the religious bodies of supporting the strike action. In response, on 9 February 2017, the Baptist, Catholic and Presbyterian religious authorities issued a joint communiqué in which they declared that they "did not call the strike [and] only the Teachers' Trade Unions had the competence to call off the strike."⁸⁰

Furthermore, in the joint communiqué, the religious authorities re-iterated that, contrary to the government accusation, they did not close their schools and colleges and stated that "the doors of our schools remain wide open to pupils and students, when parents bring their children." They decried the inhuman treatment and torture perpetrated by the forces of law and order, the destruction and violence perpetrated by unidentified persons and the shut-down of internet services in the North West and South West Regions.⁸¹ On 13 February 2017, at the behest of the Archbishop of Bamenda, His Grace Cornelius Esua, an Ad-Hoc Catholic Meeting was held in the Bamenda Cathedral Hall to examine the crisis and more particularly the issue of the "indefinite strike action." The meeting ended with resolutions which were regarded, rightly or wrongly, by the Teachers' Trade Unions as an endorsement of their strike action. The issue of the boycott of classes and the threats against teachers, pupils and students were not limited only to confessional educational institutions.

The resumption of classes was rendered very difficult because of the enforced "ghost town" operations, the burning of schools, colleges, shops and stores as well as public buildings by unidentified persons who were later identified as secessionist or Ambazonian fighters. Gradually, the target shifted to pupils, students and school officials. Some of them were kidnapped and released after the payment of ransom; others were wounded while some were simply brutally assassinated. For instance, on 30 April 2018, the Principal of St. Bede's College, Ashing-Kom in Boyo Division, Rev. Father William Neba, was kidnapped at about 6:30am during Holy Mass because St. Bede's College "was the lone school in Belo Valley functioning."⁸²

79 It was reported that the Bishops' Memorandum got mixed-up in the Mails Service at the Presidency.

80 A Joint Communiqué from the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, the Executive President of the Cameroon Baptist Convention and the Bishops of the Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC), Bamenda, 9 February 2017.

81 Ibid.

82 *Cameroon Panorama*, No. 720, June 2018, 8. Rev. Father William Neba was later released on 2 May 2018.

Earlier, on 27 March 2018, Emmanuel Galega, a student of St. Benedict's Comprehensive College (SABEC), Widikum, in Momo Division, was shot dead. At the Requiem Mass, Archbishop Cornelius Esua captured the ugliness of the crisis when he pointedly described late Emmanuel Galega as: "One of the holy innocents brutally murdered as a result of the crisis where people are kidnapped, tortured, arrested and the indiscriminate burning of houses and villages that has rendered many people refugees in and out of their country."⁸³

The security and protection which the government promised the educational authorities fell short of what was expected. This was especially so at the resumption of classes for the 2018/2019 academic year: the Principal of PSS Bafut and six students were abducted on 3 September 2018 and released later in the day; the Principal of PGST Bafut was attacked and brutally wounded on 3 September 2018; the Principal and Vice-Principal of GBHS Mankon were abducted on 6 September 2018 while teachers and students were attacked and some killed in Ndop and Babanki, just to mention a few cases. It was no secret that some Anglophone clergymen and women expressed their sympathy and support for the grievances of the teachers and lawyers. Some of them also supported the call for a return to the pre-1972 two-state federal structure; some even supported the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions (former Southern Cameroon).

For instance, it was reported that Rev. Father Patrick Lafon told Archbishop Samuel Klede that: "I am a Southern Cameroonian citizen...but today the Francophones have decided that they do not want us....We want to go, the people have spoken....This is by extension how you people have close to five decades, dehumanized our people. *Independence is what the people want*" [Emphasis added].⁸⁴ Similarly, Rev. Pastor Denis Kang of the PCC criticized Stephen Afuh, President of the Presbyterian Education Authority Teachers' Trade Union (PEATTU), for accepting to call off the strike. According to Franklin Bayen, Pastor Kang likened Afuh "to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot."⁸⁵ There was no doubt that this embarrassed some of the members of the various religious denominations and also irked the government. The government,

83 *Cameron Panorama*, No. 719, April/May 2018, 33.

84 Godwin Gham Nyinchiah, "The Resilience of British Southern Cameroons/Anglophone Statist Identity, 1939-2017" Ph.D Thesis: University of Buea, 2022), 366 of Reported by Godwin Gham Nyinchiah from a meeting he held with Rev. Father Lafon and Rev. Father Williams Neba, Bamenda, 29 April 2019.

85 Franklin S. Bayen, "Major Events and Actors of the 2016-2017 Anglophone Lawyers and Teachers Strikes: A Journalistic Perspective," in Kashim I. Tala and Kingsley L. Ngange (eds.) *Anglophone Lawyers and Teachers Strikes in Cameroon (2016-2017): A Multidimensional Perspective* (Yaounde: Les Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2019), 92.

generally speaking, believed that the churches in the North West and South West Regions did not do enough and even felt that they were in league with the teachers and lawyers. In the joint communiqué of 9 February 2017 by the Church leaders, the government's insinuation that they were in league with the striking teachers and lawyers was vehemently rejected in the following words:

Mindful of the fact all the churches run schools, thus rendering a great service to the state and the parents, whose children they educate and evangelize, the Church leaders would want to state unequivocally that they were neither consulted nor did they give any express consent for the initiation of the strike action or its suspension.⁸⁶

The government, however, refused to recognize that it ignored all the memoranda which the churches, either individually or jointly, especially the Catholic Church, sent expressing their readiness, if permitted, to assist in finding solutions to the crisis. In April 2017, the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) met in Yaounde and mandated its President, Archbishop Samuel Kleda, to head a delegation to the Dioceses in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province. The aim of the visit was to examine the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West Regions. The visit, despite the laudable intention, was not well received in certain dioceses because of misunderstanding and a breakdown in communication. Archbishop Kleda, nonetheless, "urged the parties concerned to continue dialogue and the search for institutional and human solutions." He reminded his various audiences that they must "ensure the peace and education of our children for a better tomorrow... [because] nothing can be more than the Lord in his vineyard."⁸⁷

Archbishop Kleda's mission, unfortunately, took place when some priests in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province had openly voiced their unflagging support for the secession and independence of the North-West and South-West Regions. In addition to Rev. Fr. Patrick Lafon, three other Catholic Priests stood out in support of the cause: Rev Fathers Wilfred Emeh, David Fomanka and Gerald Jumban. In April 2017, Rev. Fr. Wilfred Emeh said that "the two cultures [French and Anglo-Saxon] were never meant to be one and undivided as insinuated by Mr. Biya, therefore what nature has put asunder, no man should put together. **Consequently, we need the restoration of our statehood**" [Emphasis in original].⁸⁸

86 *The Star*, No. 416, 6.

87 *The Star*, Monday, 8 May 2017, 21.

88 Cited in Joseph Lon Nfi, *The Catholic church and Anglophone Sub-nationalism in Cameroon* (Glienicke, Germany: Galda Verlag, 2022), 385

In a similar vein, in May 2017, Rev Fr. David Fomanka stated as follows: "This is not a dignified union and no one can sit still and just think it is enough to be obedient to a system that does not guarantee the right, dignity, freedom... It is time to make a strong move and unseal the bond that is not workable."⁸⁹ But the most vocal support of the armed struggle came from Rev. Fr. Gerald Jumban.

In May 2017, Rev. Fr. Jumban castigated the position of the Catholic Church in Cameroon vis-à-vis the crisis. In an acidic letter to Archbishop Kleda, Rev. Fr. Jumban lamented:

If we [Southern Cameroons] act consistently with our history, we cannot be loyal subjects to the despicable and tyrannous Yaoundé government... If the Church truly cared for its members, the problem will not be happening every now and then. And the oppressed people of British Cameroons are undergoing something of a genocide now because the ... [NECC] is on holidays... The urgency of speaking for despoiled peoples is so felt that I don't really care if this anger breaks the bounds of office... that is why the British Cameroon's greatest obstacle in the walk towards independence is... but the federalists.⁹⁰

Rev. Fr. Jumban later wrote to a frontline secessionist in the USA calling on "the activists to remain committed to the struggle."⁹¹ Little wonder that the government felt apprehensive about the position of the Catholic Church in Cameroon.

Church Leaders Dragged to Court

By a strange twist of events, the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province, the Moderator of the PCC and the Executive President of the CBC were taken to Court in April 2017 by a Consortium of Parents for "refusing to re-open their schools." The complainants charged the eight Church leaders with refusing to open their doors for the 2016/2017 academic year after they had collected school fees from parents and pupils in their various schools and colleges.⁹² The complainants, through their Consortium,

89 Ibid., 385

90 Ibid., 388-396

91 Ibid., 406

92 The Church leaders were Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua of the Bamenda Archdiocese, Auxiliary Bishop Michael Bibi of the Bamenda Archdiocese, Bishop George Nkuo of the Kumbo Diocese and President of the Bamenda Episcopal Conference, Bishop Andrew Nkea of the Mamfe Diocese, Bishop Immanuel Bushu of the Buea Diocese, Bishop Agapitus Nfon of the Kumbo Diocese, Rt. Rev Moderator Samuel Forba of the PCC and the Executive Secretary of the CBC Rev Godwill Chiatoh

demanded 150 billion francs CFA as damages.⁹³ The eight Church leaders were put into two groups: the Bamenda Magistrate Court Group which had Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua, Bishop George Nkuo, Auxiliary Bishop Michael Bibi and Rev. Godwill Chiatoh Ncham, the Executive Secretary of the CBC; and the Buea Magistrate Court Group had Bishop Andrew Nkea, Bishop Immanuel Bushu, Bishop Agapitus Nfon and the Rt. Rev Moderator Samauel Fonki Forba. The trial was adjourned several times: it was first slated for 21 April 2017; it was postponed to 5 June 2017 then to 24 July 2017 and finally the trial was discontinued on 25 September 2017.

The huge crowd which the various groups in the Catholic Church, the PCC and the CBC rallied at each of the trial dates in the Buea and Bamenda Magistrate Courts was unprecedented in the history of Cameroon. If the trial of the Church leaders was an attempt by the government to intimidate them, the action backfired lamentably. The Teachers' Trade Unions suspended their strike action on 4 February 2017 but it had little or no effect because the timid resumption of classes which improved as weeks and months went by was not an indication that the Teachers' Trade Unions were in-charge. In May 2017, the lawyers also called off their strike action. Classes resumed in the most ineffective manner in several localities in the North West and South West Regions right to the start of the 2018/2019 academic year. The teachers and lawyers were no longer masters of the havoc they had created and some of them recognized the fact that they were not for the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions.

Crisis Degenerated into Armed Conflict

The failure of the peaceful resumption of classes in January 2017 hardened the position of the Teachers' Trade Unions especially when their leaders changed the professional grievances and demands. The violence which erupted on the night of Friday, 13 January 2017 and the government's steadfast refusal to entertain demands which called into question the form of the state and the territorial integrity of the country eventually unleashed a wave of attacks and killings of some members of the national defense and security forces by militants of the declared so-called Federal Republic of Ambazonia (later in 2017) and civilians by members of the national defence and security forces. The attacks on the military gathered steam after the massive demonstration of 22 September 2017 when President Biya did not highlight the Anglophone Crisis in his address at the UN in New York.

Ncham.

93 *The Post Weekender*, No. 01814, Friday, 21 April 2017, 8; *The Post Weekender*, No. 01850, Friday, 08 September 2017, 2.

In order to prevent a repeat of the 22 September 2017 anti-government demonstrations in the North West and South West Regions, the Governors of both Regions separately issued orders imposing curfew periods from 29 September to 2 October 2017. It was believed, and rightly so, that Anglophone activists would call on the population of the North West and South West Regions to come out massively on 1st October to celebrate their “independence.” Almost all authorities of boarding colleges in the North West and South West Regions sent their students home on a one-week “holiday-break;” and, they were asked to return for classes only after 2nd October 2017.

1st October Syndrome and Impact in 2017

First October always created political tension in Cameroon especially in the North West and South West Regions (former Provinces) since 1972 when the federal system was dismantled. It gathered steam after 1984 with the change of name from the “United Republic of Cameroon” to the “Republic of Cameroon” and the emergence of pro-Anglophone pressure groups. The 1st of October was regarded as “Independence Day.” The radical wing of the pro-Anglophone pressure groups used it to demand the “restoration” of the territory’s independence. Some federalists and secessionists celebrated 1st October as “Southern Cameroons Day.” But, “Southern Cameroons Day” was 26 October 1954 when the territory was granted a “Quasi-Federal Territorial status;” that is limited autonomy.⁹⁴

The year 1st October 1961 was when Southern Cameroons achieved independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon. The stage for the deaths and destruction that occurred on 1st October 2017 was set on 22 September 2017 when President Biya addressed the UN General Assembly. President Biya’s speech at the UN General Assembly did not mention the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon to the disappointment of many Cameroonians especially Anglophones. This radicalized a section of the Anglophone population in the North West and South West Regions and calls for the “independence of Southern Cameroons” and the “restoration of the independence” of

94 The SCHA adopted 26 October and the date was celebrated as the granting of limited autonomy; it was celebrated from 1957 until 1963 when it was stopped. Between 1961 and 1963, both 1st October (“Independence and Reunification Day”) and 26 October (“Southern Cameroons Day”) were celebrated. In fact, “Southern Cameroons Day” was celebrated as “Youth Sports Day” in West Cameroon and President Ahidjo gave the day and the event the dignity it deserved. For instance, in an address to the West Cameroon youths on 26 October 1961, President Ahidjo said, amongst other things: “We will strive unceasingly, by every means at our disposal, to develop in the youth sound mind and body.... Though absent from West Cameroon, we are with you in spirit during your games....” WCIS, Buea, “The President’s Message to School Children on 26th October 1961,” *Press Release No. 1580*, 2nd November 1961.

the territory replaced calls for a “return to federalism.”

Some Cameroonians in the diaspora, especially in South Africa, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Holland, Nigeria and Norway who financed most of those who organized the demonstrations in the North West and South West Regions dictated the pace of activities to be adopted by the extremists. They settled for the “Zero Option” which was the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions (former Southern Cameroons) which they christened the Federal Republic of Ambazonia.⁹⁵

The influence of the diaspora in the crisis and the adoption of the extremist position of secession and independence were vividly expressed by John Fru Ndi during the SDF National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting in 2017. At that meeting, Fru Ndi said: There is a very strong current in the presence of the crisis which is the request for outright separation by those in the Diasporas. The SDF is a national party that has always stood for federalism... *we have discovered that most of the people clamouring for secession are being sponsored* [Emphasis added].⁹⁶ It was an open secret that the extremist call for armed secession attracted enormous financial contribution under the sensational banner of “My Trip To Buea” (MTTB). Anglophones who supported the Ambazonian diktat were told that “their President” would declare the independence of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia in Buea on 1st October 2017. The social media was effectively used to disseminate the false information. Surprisingly, thousands of Anglophones of all ages believed the information and despite the curfew, they braved the odds and trekked several kilometres from Tiko, Limbe, Mile Four, Mutengene, Ekona, several neighbourhoods in Buea and Muyuka to attend the “ceremony” in Buea.

Similar marches and “celebrations” were organized in other towns in the North West and South West Regions. The curfew was violated by protesters under the pretext that they were peaceful as they carried “peace plants.” But some of them were anything

95 The name *Ambazonia* is derived from *Ambass Bahia*. The Portuguese arrived in the area which Alfred Saker later bought in 1858 as part of Victoria (now Limbe) on the Feast Day of St. Ambrose, 7 December 1492. They named the bay *Ambass Bahia* meaning *Ambrose Bay*. It was later called *Ambos*. The *Ambos* was either the islands in the Bay which was named Victoria or Nicoll Island near Bimbia. The people of the country were called *Ambous*. They were said to be well-built, tall and were cannibals. The name *Ambos* appeared in a letter from the Portuguese explorer, Duarte Rodrigues, to the King of Portugal dated 10 May 1529. British traders and missionaries called it *Ambass Bay*. In 1984, Gorji Dinka, after the 4th February 1984 law which changed the name from the “United Republic of Cameroon” to the “Republic of Cameroon,” referred to former Southern Cameroons as *Ambazonia*. He coined it from *Ambass Bay*. For more discussion on *Ambos*, see Ardenner, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon*, 7-9.

96 *The Rambler*, No. 0070, Tuesday, 19 September 2017, 4.

but peaceful. In several towns and villages, there were violent confrontations between the forces of law and order and the protesters which left scores of people dead and immense material/property damaged.⁹⁷ In some localities, the Ambazonia flag was symbolically hoisted but the expected declaration of independence never materialized. The “President” who was expected to declare the territory’s independence was not even in Cameroon. But scores of Cameroonians died because of the manipulation and intoxication.

The extent of the intoxication and manipulation was aptly captured by the Bishops of the Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC) in their Declaration of 2 October 2017 after the deadly events of 22 September 2017 and of 1st October 2017. In the declaration, the Bishops condemned, amongst others:

The intoxication and exploitation of the masses by some of the members of the restoration group, some of them had told the population to march into government offices and take back their country. They were to arrest any civil administrators who had not abdicated and take them to the palaces of Fons and Chiefs. This was irrational and not feasible... the result has been the arrest, torture and killing of so many people.⁹⁸

Although demonstrations and manifestations were outlawed in the North West and South West Regions, 1st October 2017 witnessed authorized marches and manifestations in several towns and cities in the other regions of Cameroon such as Douala, Yaounde, Ebolowa and Bafoussam. In Yaounde, for instance, senators and parliamentarians gathered at the esplanade of the Reunification Monument. At the end of the manifestation in Yaounde, the President of Senate and the Speaker of the National Assembly signed a joint declaration in which they “out- rightly condemned actions aimed at destabilizing Cameroon.”⁹⁹ It was the first time after about 45 years that 1st October was officially celebrated in any part of Cameroon. But, the populations in the North West and South West Regions were not privileged to celebrate it on 1st October 2017 although it directly concerned them.

The thousands of Anglophones who marched on 1st October 2017 in the North West and South West Regions to have their “Independence” restored or attempted marching to Buea to listen to the declaration of the “independence” of the “Federal Republic of Ambazonia” were not told that secession was not the goal of the banned Consortium. Although when Harmony Bobga and Tassang called for the independence of the

97 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1265, Monday, 09 October 2017, 7.

98 *Ibid.*

99 *Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11442/7641, Monday/Lundi, October 02 Octobre 2017, 2.

two English-speaking regions once they escaped out of Cameroon. Barrister Agbor Balla, one of the leaders of the banned Consortium, dismissed the notion of secession and independence and reiterated that: "The Consortium had never spoken about independence, restoration and secession.... We were for a two-state federation; we have never been for secession, restoration or independence."¹⁰⁰

In a strongly worded 24-point declaration, BAPEC condemned "the barbarism and irresponsible use of firearms against unarmed civilians" and demanded the release of "all those arrested in connection" with the crisis. The Bishops also called for the demilitarization of the North West and South West Regions and "vehemently condemn [ed] the intoxication and exploitation of the masses by members of the restoration group."¹⁰¹ The government, through its spokesperson, Issa Tchiroma, in response to the Bishops' declaration, quipped:

Through their messages of imaginations and untruths, one wonders whether, without their knowledge... [they] have become objective allies of the secessionists. If not, how can we speak in favour of those who burn down churches, students' dormitories and place *bomb to decimate an entire city and its people* [Emphasis added].¹⁰²

In spite of the difficulties which the Catholic Church encountered in her attempts to be an honest broker in the crisis, the Bishops relentlessly maintained the Church's quest for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through an inclusive dialogue and prayers. In August 2018, the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province met in Bamenda from 16 to 23 August 2018 and issued a "9-point Consideration Message to Christians" which, amongst others, decried the violence and destruction in the North West and South West Regions.

Biya Reacted to the killings of some members of the National Defense and Security Forces

The violent protests, which initially started as "peaceful" on 22 September 2017 and 1st October 2017, left scores of Cameroonians dead in several towns in the North West and South West Regions and enormous property destroyed. The deaths and the enormous destruction of property drew sharp reaction from the civil society, international bodies and church leaders. In early November 2017, the Ambazonian Defense Forces (ADF)

¹⁰⁰ *The Post*, No. 01864, Monday, 30 October 2017, 5. Bobga and Tassang together with Agbor Balla were officials of the banned Consortium.

¹⁰¹ *The Post*, 01858, 6-7.

¹⁰² *The Post Weekender*, No. 01859, Friday, 13 October 2017, 2.

killed three gendarmes in Bamenda and in the same month, military and police officers were killed in Dadi in Akwaya and Eyumojock Sub-Divisions in Manyu Division. On 9 November 2017, the Cameroon government issued international arrest warrants for a number of secessionist leaders, including Julius Ayuk Tabe, in the diaspora.

In a calculated move to address the Anglophone Crisis in the Senate and National Assembly, SDF MPs, after having failed to put the Anglophone Crisis on the agenda of the November 2017 parliamentary and senate sessions, boisterously prevented Prime Minister Philemon Yang from presenting the budget to Parliament on 29 November 2017. Unkind words and slogans were used against President Biya, both in the National Assembly and in the Senate, by the “aggrieved” SDF MPs and Senators. The attempt failed especially as these members were not supported by other MPs and Senators; not even Anglophone MPs and Senators who were members of the CPDM. Prime Minister Yang calmly watched as the strange scene unfolded and when sanity returned, he presented the budget.

Later, during an interview on 30 November 2017 at the Yaounde Nsimalen International Airport, President Biya, in responding to a question on the wave of assassinations of members of the national defense and security forces, said:

I learnt with emotion the murder of four Cameroonian soldiers and two policemen in the South West of our country. Following the disappearance of these six brave military and police officers, I would like to express my condolences to the families and to our radiant defense and security forces. I think things are now perfectly clear. *Cameroon is the victim of repeated attacks from a band of terrorists running a secessionist movement.* In the face of these attacks, I wish to reassure the Cameroonian people that *all steps are being taken to hunt down the criminals* and to ensure ...[the safety of Cameroonians] throughout the country [Emphasis added].¹⁰³

The Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) accepted responsibility for the “deadly attacks that claimed the lives of four soldiers and two policemen...”¹⁰⁴ The Chairman of the defence wing of the AGC, Ben Kuah, defended the killing of the four soldiers and two policemen saying that “one of the main objectives is to clear the checkpoints that they [the military and the police] have put on our roads.” Ayaba Cho, another AGC official,

¹⁰³ <https://www.cameroonintelligencereport.com/biya-response-to-serail-assassination-of-soldiers> (accessed 4 June 2020). The reproduction of Biya’s response in its entirety is very important in view of its deliberate misinterpretation by several “Ambazonian” leaders, their supporters and sympathizers.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.africanews.com/2017/12/04/cameroon-secessionists-vow-to-fight-despite-biya-s-war/> (accessed 20 December 2017).

added that “we will dismantle outposts that have been used to prosecute the occupation of our homeland.”¹⁰⁵ According to Cho, the military and police officers were gunned down because they manned military/police control posts in Ambazonian territory. It was widely held, nonetheless, by some Anglophones that Biya, on 30 November 2017, in the interview, declared war on Anglophones and the population of the North West and South West Regions (former Southern Cameroons). Notwithstanding the fact that Biya’s statement was in reference to the armed secessionists whom he referred to as “criminals.”

The misinterpretation and deceit gained currency and Amba fighters in the North West and South West Regions (referred to as “Ground Zero”) took shelter behind it by asserting that it was Biya who declared war on Anglophones. This was unambiguously stated in a communiqué by the Interim Government of Ambazonia which read, in part: “let us recall that 30th November 2017 is on record as the day French Cameroun’s President, Paul Biya, instructed his army to launch an extermination campaign on the people of Southern Cameroons.”¹⁰⁶ This accusation gained acceptance in certain circles but it was far from the truth. Before Biya’s statement in November 2017, armed separatists had been directed by various Ambazonian groups in the diaspora to march to “Government offices and take back their country.” They were also instructed to arrest “any civil administrators who had not abdicated” and hand them over to their fons and chiefs.¹⁰⁷

In September-October 2017, several localities were attacked by Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) with Dadi in Akwaya Sub-Division, Manyu Division, taking the lead: Ambazonia flags were hoisted and independence was declared. The ADF established a foothold in Dadi but they were later flushed out by the military. On 1st October 2017, the Ambazonia Consortium United Front (ACUF) “formally” declared the independence of the North West and South West Regions which it christened the Federal Republic of Ambazonia. The illegal hoisting of a “foreign” flag; the killing of some police and military officers by the ADF and the ACUF; and, the declaration of independence were, of course, a declaration of war against Cameroon by the ACUF and all its affiliates because their actions threatened the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon. The “criminals,” therefore, declared war and not President Biya.

Of course, the government initially responded with excessive use of force and the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Dabney Yerima, Vice-President, The Federal Republic of Ambazonia, “Interim Government Statement on the Threats to Archbishop Andrew Nkea’s life,” 25 May 2020.

¹⁰⁷ *The Guardian Post*, No. 1265, Monday, 09 October 2017, 7.

armed separatists unjustifiably reacted by assassinating members of the national defence and security forces. The armed separatists were illegal and they violated the laws on the possession and usage of fire arms in Cameroon. Dadi was used as the military and command base by the armed separatists. Before Biya's interview on 30 November 2017, armed separatists and Ambazonian forces in various uncoordinated groups had, therefore, declared war on Cameroon by their actions contrary to what some Anglophone activists, their supporters and sympathizers said by pointing an accusing finger at Biya.

Those whom Biya qualified as "terrorists running a secessionist movement" and "all steps are being taken to hunt" them down were not mandated by the vast majority of Anglophones in the North West and South West Regions to take up arms; at least, there was no evidence to that effect. This was especially disturbing because almost 99.5% of all those who were assassinated, abducted for ransom or mutilated were Anglophones most of whom, like the workers of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), did absolutely nothing against the two Anglophone Regions. All the schools, colleges and businesses that the Amba fighters torched were in the North West and South West Regions.¹⁰⁸

It was, therefore, dishonest to assert that Biya's re-assurance to Cameroonians and the international community that "all steps are being taken to hunt down the criminals;" and, ensure the safety of all Cameroonians amounted to a declaration of war on the population of the North West and South West Regions. The re-assurance was not even an informal declaration of war nor was it a declaration "to launch an extermination campaign on the people of Southern Cameroons." It was against this background that the corporate demands of the Anglophone teachers' trade unions and Common Law lawyers degenerated into armed conflict. But the SCNC and armed Ambazonians had planned to declare the independence of the North West and South West Regions through armed means in 1995.

SCNC Declared War Before November 2016

It should be noted that the attack on Anglophones in the North West and South West Regions by armed secessionist militants of the SCNC in quest for the independence of the two regions did not begin in 2016/2017. The idea of resorting to an armed struggle to achieve independence for the two English-speaking regions was the brainchild of the

¹⁰⁸ The tendency was to call or qualify anybody who did not espouse the Ambazonian position as a supporter of the CPDM government, an enabler, a blackleg, a spy or a traitor.

SCNC at its creation in 1995. The motto of the SCNC was : fight “for freedom, justice and [the]right to self-determination.”

The SCNC, under the chairmanship of Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad, planned to declare the independence of the two regions in 1995. The secret resolution of AAC II in 1994 rejected a return to a federal system or autonomy and called for secession and independence. Barrister Elad later, reportedly, developed cold feet. In the absence of Barrister Elad, Ambassador Martin Epie and Ambassador Henry Fossung gunned for the position of Chairperson of the SCNC which the latter won. In the midst of the in-fighting in the SCNC, John Ngu Foncha was invited to step in and reconcile the two principal factions: the Cho Ayaba/Ebenezer Akwanga Group and the Fossung Group. The goal was to unite the various factions within the SCNC and adopt a common programme for the attainment of the independence of the two regions. Foncha did not succeed in reconciling and uniting the various factions but he supported their call for the independence of the two regions.

Meanwhile, in early 1995, the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) was formed and it was launched in Bamenda on 30 August 1995. The SCYL aimed at liberating “Southern Cameroons from annexation by La Republique du Cameroun.”¹⁰⁹ Its leadership met with John Ngu Foncha, ST Muna, Lawan Bako of the United Democratic Party (UDP) and John Fru Ndi of the SDF. The SCYL “vowed to fight to [the] finish in defence of Southern Cameroons Independence.”¹¹⁰ In 1997, Cho Ayaba and his group within the SCNC held several meetings in Douala, Limbe, Mutengene and Bamenda during which they secretly brainstormed on the methods to be used to achieve the independence of the two regions. In order to raise an armed group, Cho Ayaba and his team went to Man-O’-War Bay in Limbe and recruited some Anglophones whom they planned to use to seize the territory and declare its independence. The SCNC, despite its internal divisions, created a Revolutionary Command Council headed by Justice Frederick Alobwede Ebong. Their goal, as it turned out, was to use armed force to terrorize the Anglophone population in the North West and South West Regions and compel the government to give in to their quest for independence.

In March 1997, for instance, suspected armed SCNC militants attacked government installations in some localities in the North West Province (now Region) and in the course of the attacks, ten persons were killed. According to the UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN): “In March [1997], 10 people were killed in North West Province [now Region] in attacks, which authorities blamed on the SCNC. Dozens of

¹⁰⁹ *The Herald*, No. 235, Monday, 28-30 August 1995, 2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Anglophone Cameroonians... were imprisoned and later charged.”¹¹¹ After the SCNC attacked the CRTV Radio Station, Buea, in December 1999, several of its members were arrested, as discussed earlier. Between January and April 2000, some SCNC militants were arrested and in May 2000, the SCNC was banned in the South West Region. In 2006, a faction of the SCNC declared the two regions of the North West and South West as the independent Republic of Ambazonia. The SCNC went on to create the SCAPO. In 2007, the armed wing of the SCNC, SCAPO, attacked the Cameroon military in Bakassi. In January 2017, all the activities of the SCNC were banned in Cameroon.

There is no doubt that the corporate grievances which the Anglophone Teachers’ Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers’ associations tabled in 2015 and 2016 were exploited by the SCNC and its financiers in-and-out of Cameroon to realise what had been their goal since 1995; and since 1994 by the sponsors and supporters of AAC II. The attack on government installations and the killing of ten persons; the illegal declaration of the independence of the two regions; and, the attack on the military at Bakassi were nothing short of a declaration of war.

Conclusion

The Anglophone Problem was created because of the misconception that the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons were reunified “on the basis of a federation” and, therefore, the *federation* was sacrosanct. In order to understand and appreciate the Anglophone Problem and, by extension, the Anglophone Crisis, Cameroonians and the international community must revisit the July 1961 Fomuban Conference and the August 1961 Yaounde Tripartite Talks and understand how the resolutions from these conferences were implemented. Although Foncha sincerely opted for a federal system, his notion that re-unification enabled Cameroon to *retrieve* part of its territory played into the hands of Ahidjo who wanted to consolidate as much power as possible in his hands in a highly centralized federal system.

Ahidjo, as an astute politician, exploited the lapses in the federal constitution, the failure of the MPs in the Federal National Assembly to use Article 18 at certain crucial moments in the life of the federal system and the in-fighting in West Cameroon to chip away the guarantees inherent in a federal structure. The establishment of a one-party system in 1966 and the dismantling of federalism in 1972 with the massive support of West Cameroonians through Article 2 of the constitution opened the floodgate of the Anglophone Problem. This was set in motion in October 1961 with the enactment of Decree No. 61/DF/15 of 20 October 1961. Various actions and events which were taken by the Ahidjo government and later by the Biya government galvanized Anglophone

111 United Nations IRIN, “Cameroon: UN Secretary-General Stresses Dialogue,” 4 May 2000.

political activists who created political pressure groups to articulate their grievances and propose what they thought was the best solution.

The Anglophone teachers and lawyers, broadly supported by a cross section of the Anglophone population, called for an indefinite school boycott. The school boycott had the “concealed” approval of the religious authorities in the North West and South West Regions and made it difficult for the government to accept them as honest brokers in search of a peaceful solution to the crisis. The hard line utterances of some of the government ministers did not help the situation. At the end, the Anglophone Problem, the Crisis, degenerated into an armed conflict which is the central thesis of the next chapter.

ANGLOPHONE CRISIS TRANSFORMED INTO ARMED CONFLICT

Introduction

What initially started as a request by Common Law lawyers and Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions to the government to address their corporate grievances and also respect the norms of their respective professions escalated into armed conflict between the Cameroon army and several extremist groups of Anglophones. The motley of extremist groups was generally referred to as secessionists or separatists. These extremist groups exploited the corporate grievances and demanded profound constitutional changes in the country. The decision by the lawyers and teachers to call all and sundry to join the strike was unfortunate as threats were used to enforce the call for school boycott and "ghost towns."

In several instances, shops, stores, markets, school buildings and public and private buildings were burnt. Similarly, pupils, students and teachers were physically attacked, and some were assassinated, by those who were usually called "unarmed innocent civilians" or "unidentified armed groups." Gradually, identified armed groups emerged and the original grievances as presented by the lawyers and teachers were, literally speaking, put into the dustbin of history. The extremists who had a hidden agenda hijacked the original genuine corporate demands of the Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers' associations. The original demands were replaced by an uncompromising call for the secession and independence of the two English-speaking regions.

The non-violent call for a resolution of the Anglophone Problem/Crisis was transformed into a senseless and gruesome armed conflict between Amba fighters (secessionist Anglophones who called themselves Ambazonians) and the national defence and security forces. The path to armed separation was the main secret resolution of the All-Anglophone Conference II (AAC II) held in Bamenda in 1994. It should be recalled that AAC II rejected a return to a federal system and also rejected autonomy. The secret resolution of AAC II called for the use of armed force, if need be, to achieve the separation and independence of the North West and South West Regions. This was also the political platform of the SCNC. The creation of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil

Society (Consortium) with its secessionist agenda was initially meant to be used as a negotiating platform to attain a federal system.

But the arrest of some members of the Consortium; the hidden secessionist tendencies of some of its members; its marriage with extremist Anglophones in the diaspora; the gross distortion of the history of the decolonization of British Southern Cameroons and its subsequent political evolution; the internal subtle political power-struggle in Cameroon for the successor of President Biya; and, the unrealistic expectation of foreign intervention in favour of the secessionists gave an upper hand to the separatist wing in the Consortium and to uncompromising secessionist Anglophone hardliners. The corporate demands of the Teachers' Trade Unions and Common Law lawyers' associations were, therefore, hijacked and transformed into an armed conflict which became a flourishing business.

Secessionist Amba Fighters and the Anglophone Population

Some Anglophones in the diaspora formed an Interim Government (IG) styled the Federal Republic of Ambazonia led by Julius Tabe Ayuk. Tabe Ayuk finally succumbed to secessionist hardliners and accepted to be the President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia. The secessionists, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), consisted of two main armed groups or militias. The first group comprised the Tigers, Vipers and Ambaland forces. The second group was made up of several rebel militia groups:

- i. The Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF) led by Lucas Ayaba Cho and Benedict Nwana Kuah. It operated in the South West Region;
- ii. The Southern Cameroons Defense Forces (SOCADEF) headed by Ebenezer Akwanga. It operated in the South West Region;
- iii. A homonym group called the Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SCDF) led by Nso Foncha Nkem who reportedly served in the US Army;
- iv. The Lebialem Red Dragons reportedly led by Ivo Tapang operated in the Lebialem Division in the South West Region. Tapang was later disowned by Oliver Lekeaka, "Field Marshal," in a released video. The Red Dragons in July 2018 reportedly stormed the Lewoh Palace in Lebialem and carted away antiquities: statues, elephant tusk, tiger skins and the Fon's walking stick;
- v. The Manyu Ghost Warriors led by Martin Ashu operated in Manyu Division in the South West Region;
- vi. The Ambazonia Self-Defence Restoration Army led by former police officer Paxson Agbor;

- vii. The Ndian Warriors led by “Field Marshal” 10 Kobo operated in Ndian Division;
- viii. The Tigers of Ambazonia which operated in Meme and Manyu Divisions in the South West Region¹;
- ix. The “7 Kata” was led by “General” Alhaji and the group operated in Bafut, Mezam Division where it rained havoc on the population until May 2020 when “General” Alhaji and 15 of his fighters were eliminated by government soldiers;
- x. The Bambalang Marine Forces in Ndop Division was led by “General” No Pity;
- xi. The Bui Unity Warriors in Bui Division was also led by “General” No Pity;
- xii. Fako Mountain Lions in Fako Division operated from Buea Sub-division to Muyuka Sub-division;
- xiii. The Jaguars of Bamessing was led by “General Sagard” and it operated in Ngoketunjia Division;
- xiv. The Black Hearts of Banga Bakundu operated in Mbonge Sub-division in Meme Division;
- xv. The Alou Gorilla Fighters led by “General Ayeke” operated in Lebialem; and,
- xvi. The Fako- Meme Black Tar Council led by “General above the Law,” Augustine Ambe.

The main groups, therefore, were:

- i. The Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) which was created in 2011 by former members of the SCNC and SCYL. Its armed wing was the ADF;
- ii. The Southern Cameroons People’s Organization (SCAPO) was created in 2001 to handle legal cases for the independence of Southern Cameroons;
- iii. The Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) was founded in 1995 by Anglophone Youths and led by Ebenezer Akwanga. The SCYL was for the independence of Southern Cameroons; and,
- iv. The Movement for the Restoration of the Independence of Southern Cameroons (MoRISC) was created in 2016 in the USA and it was led by Herbert Boh.

In February 2017, the Southern Cameroons Ambazonia United Front (SCACUF) was created as an umbrella association for the Republic of Ambazonia (RoA), SCNC,

1 “Report International crisis Group, 2017;” Human Right Watch, *These killings can be stopped: Government and Separatist Groups Abuses in Cameroon’s Anglophone Regions* (USA in: n.p 2018), 20-21.

SCAPO, SCYL and the Consortium. In March 2018, the Ambazonia Self-Defence Council (ASDC) was founded to represent most of the armed groups. It was not clear which particular group(s) operated in the North West Region and the South West Region. It was initially believed that the activities of these armed secessionist groups were more violent and deadly in the South West Region than in the North West Region. But, as the crisis and conflict evolved, the North West Region became the centre of horrible and monstrous dehumanization of the human person. The crisis took on a violent and deadly turn in September/October 2017; but, more especially from 2018.

In July 2018, about eight Bakweri Chiefs in Fako Division, South West Region, were kidnapped.² Some of the chiefs were later seen on videos praising the activities of their captors, the Ambazonia fighters, and calling for the independence of the North West and South West Regions. One of the Chiefs, William Njie Mbanda of Lysoka Moliwe Village, died in captivity on Friday, 27 July 2018 and on Monday, 30 July 2018 the other seven chiefs were released. The Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province was also affected both in terms of human lives lost and the destruction of property. For instance, on 20 July 2018, Rev. Fr. Alexander Nougé Sob, Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Parish Bomaka, Buea, was assassinated in Muyuka, Fako Division, by "ill-intentioned persons." The Chiefs in the South West Region were again bereaved when an Ambazonia militia group led by Ebot Ojong Ebot, alias "Colonel" Ebot, brutally removed HRH Chief Dr. Ofondo Esoh Itoh, Paramount Ruler of the Balondo people in Ndian Division, from the Baptist Church where he was attending service on Sunday, 12 August 2018 and assassinated him.

The higher education family in Cameroon also experienced the ugly, devastating and irreparable consequences of the crisis. On Thursday, 25 October 2018, Associate Professor Paul Mbufong was shot dead at Bambui, Bamenda. In October 2018, the Baptist Mission in Cameroon and the US were directly affected by the brutal atrocities which emanated from the crisis. On 30 October 2018, Rev. Charles Trumann Wesco from Mishawaka, Indiana, and a missionary of the Believers Baptist Church in Warsaw, Indiana, was shot in Bambui, 14 km from Bamenda. According to the Cameroonian Minister of Defence, "a group of terrorists" shot at Wesco's vehicle;³ he later died in the Bamenda Regional Hospital shortly thereafter. After the killing of Rev. Charles Wesco, the Catholic Church, once more, suffered from the ugly consequences of the crisis. On

2 The abducted chiefs were Chief Mbanda of Lysoka Moliwe, Chief Lieti Woloko of Woteva, Chief Liteke of Maumu, Chief Francis Molinga of Liwuh la Malale, Chief Elinge Ndoto of Ewili, Chief Herman Njumbe of Wokwei, Chief Philip Mokwa of Wokeka; and, Chief Njombe Johnson of Wokaka.

3 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/amhtml/world/2018/10/30/us-missionary-short-killed-front-wife-son-amid-escalating-cameroon-crisis> (accessed 7 November 2018). Rev. Wesco and his family arrived Cameroon in mid October 2018.

21 November 2018, Rev. Fr. Cosmas Omboto Ondari, a Mill Hill Missionary, was shot in front of the Parish of St. Martin of Tours Kembong, Mamfe.

The sufferings of innocent civilians, despite the condemnations, continued unabated. Earlier, on 5 November 2018, about seventy-nine (79) students of the Presbyterian Secondary School (PSS), Nkwen, in the North West Region, their principal, a teacher and their driver were abducted by “General” Ahadji and his group, “7 Kata”. The condemnation against the abduction was swift. The spokesperson for the Cameroonian military, Colonel Badjeck, suggested that the “secessionist terrorists” were responsible for the abduction. He further explained that the “defence and security forces have been instructed to use all available means to manage the situation.”⁴ The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, H.E. Patricia Scotland, condemned the abduction in the following words:

I wish to categorically condemn the abduction of children or any other persons for that matter. The rights, welfare and wellbeing of children everywhere must be protected. Every child is precious.... [I call] for the immediate and safe return of the children and all other persons abducted.... Violence is not the answer. *I reiterate my call for inclusive home-grown dialogue to resolve issues in Cameroon* [Emphasis added].⁵

Several international organizations also condemned the abduction in addition to the Commonwealth. The Director for West and Central Africa of the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Marie-Pierre Poirier, condemned the abduction and called for the immediate and unconditional release of the students and the staff members. Poirier emphasized that “Attacks on schools are a violation of children’s rights and schools should be safe spaces and protected at all times.”⁶ In a similar vein, the Deputy Regional Director of Amnesty International for West and Central Africa, Samira Daoud, was appalled at the abduction and stated that “the *abduction of school children and teachers can never be justified*. Whoever is responsible must release and return the victims immediately [Emphasis added].”⁷ The US government, through its State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert, condemned the abduction in “the strongest possible terms” and demanded “the immediate and safe return of these students and staff to their families.”

4 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1529, Tuesday, 06 November 2018, 3.

5 Commonwealth Secretariat, Communication Division, “Concern over child abductions in Cameroon,” 5 November 2018

6 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1530, Wednesday, 07 November 2018, 5.

7 *Ibid.*

The abduction of 79 students from PSS Nkwen was emulated by secessionist fighters in Kumba who, on 20 November 2018, kidnapped about nine students of Lords Bilingual College, Kumba. The Cameroon army moved in swiftly and within twenty-four hours, the students were rescued in a military operation that left two secessionist fighters dead.⁸ The abduction of the students highlighted the difficult and precarious situation in which mission, government and non-confessional private schools in the two regions found themselves. Some of the non-government colleges in the two regions quietly and secretly negotiated with the secessionists. After the successful negotiations with the armed secessionists, the schools were allowed to operate unperturbed as long as they respected certain conditions which were given by the secessionists. Before the abduction of the 79 PSS students, the authorities of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) paid 2.5 million francs CFA as ransom for the release of eleven PSS students who were abducted in late October 2018.⁹ The 79 students were later released on 6 November 2018.

In December 2018, it was the turn of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Buea that was compelled to pay ransom to have its priests and their driver released. In fact, in early December 2018, SOCADEF led by Ebenezer Akwanga who resided in Maryland, USA, kidnapped three Claretian Catholic priests and their driver in Munyenge, Fako Division. The priests were released shortly thereafter upon the payment of 6.5 million francs CFA as ransom and their driver was released almost a week later.¹⁰ After the abduction of the three Roman Catholic priests, the Auxiliary Bishop of the Bamenda Archdiocese, Mgr Michael Bibi, was abducted twice. On 5 December 2018, armed secessionist fighters kidnapped him near Batibo in Momo Division, North-West Region, while he was en route to Kumba on a pastoral mission. Less than four days later, he was abducted, once more, on the Kumba-Buea road on his way back to Bamenda. Although, on both occasions, Mgr. Bibi and his driver were taken to the forest and later released unharmed, it was evident that the Ambazonian fighters were respecters of nobody.¹¹

8 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1540, Wednesday, 21 November 2018, 3; see also *The Guardian Post*, No.1541, Thursday, 22 November 2018, 5.

9 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/world-africa-46122678> (accessed 8 November 2018); *Associated Press*, "Yaounde, Cameroon, 79 kidnapped Cameroon students freed, says Church officials," Wednesday, 7 November 2018.

10 <https://youtu.be/s6EJ3qP29Fs> (accessed on 19 December 2018); see also *Cameroon Panorama*, No. 724, January 2019, 14-16.

11 *Cameroon Panorama*, No. 724, January 2019, 13. Mgr. Bibi was later appointed by Pope Francis as the Bishop of the Diocese of Buea in 2021

On 18 December 2018, six students and a teacher from Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Atiela, Nkwen-Bamenda, were abducted by an armed secessionist group; ransom was the motive for the abduction. A spokesperson for the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) condemned the act and called on “anyone with reliable information as to who is perpetuating such acts... to inform the AGC and appropriate actions ... [would be taken] to end this cycle of unfounded kidnapping.”¹² But, interestingly enough, no contact address was provided; it was general knowledge that the sponsors of the armed groups, the AGC included, had little or no control over the various armed groups on “Ground Zero.” In early 2018, eighteen persons, including five Italians and seven Swiss tourists, were kidnapped in the South West Region. They were eventually liberated on 3 April 2018. In the same vein, four employees of SOROUBAT, a road construction company on the Kumba-Ekondo Titi Road, were kidnapped. One of them, a Tunisian, was killed and the others were liberated after the payment of a ransom.

In the North West Region, the hotbeds of violence and destruction in terms of life and property were the Belo Valley in Boyo Division; and, Oshie, Mbengwi, Batibo and Widikum in Momo Division. The hotspots in Mezam Division included the Commerical Avenue, Nkwen, Bambili, Bambui, Santa and Bali. In Bui Division, the hotspots were the surrounding areas of Kumbo and Kumbo itself. In Ngo-Ketunjia Division, Ndop and Babanki were the hotspots. In Menchum Division, the Wum area was not left out. Belo, in Boyo Division, was initially the epicenter of the rage of separatist fighters in the North West and South West Regions. “General” Opopo who terrorized the population of Munyenge and several localities in Fako Division was from Belo.

“General” Amigo who was instrumental in the planting of Amba cells in Bafut, Ndop, Bui and Wum was also from Belo. Samuel Chiaba, alias Sam Soya, a drug-addict who believed in *Odeshi* was another indigene from Belo. He was alleged to have had “information about the killing of security officers.”¹³ He was also accused to have been the brain behind the assassination of two gendarmerie officers at Mbingo, Belo Sub-Division, on 1st February 2018. He was arrested on 3 February 2018 but, according to *The Post WeekENDER*, he refuted the accusation. He was, nonetheless, “tortured to death.”¹⁴

In furthering their terror, on 23 August 2018, separatist fighters burnt several trucks and caterpillars which belonged to the SOGEA SATOM Construction Company at the SATOM Base in Mile 7, Akum in Santa Sub-Division of the North West Region.

12 <http://solowayne.com/6-students> (accessed 19 December 2018).

13 *The Post WeekENDER*, No. 02162, Friday, 19 February 2021, 7.

14 *Ibid.*

SATOM won the contract to construct the long-abandoned Bamenda-Babadjou road. The road was a nightmare to travelers from Bafoussam/Mbounda to Bamenda and back. SATOM was awarded the contract in June 2017 to rehabilitate the Babajou-Bamenda Road. The road project comprised three stretches: Babajou-Matazem; Matazem Welcome to Bamenda; and, Welcome to Bamenda to the city of Bamenda. These three stretches together formed part of the Yaounde-Enugu Corridor which was funded by the World Bank and the African Development Bank. SATOM workers and construction equipment provided choice targets for Amba fighters. In June 2021, the Minister of Public Works acknowledged that the incessant attacks on SATOM workers, military officers at the Matazem military control post and SATOM construction equipment compelled the company to stop work in January 2021.

The gravity of the crisis and the degree of insecurity forced many senior administrative officials in some of the divisions in the North West and South West Regions to abandon their administrative posts and duties. The most affected divisions were Menchum (6 officials) and Momo (2 officials) in the North West Region; Meme (1 official), Lebialem (3 officials), Kupe-Manenguba (1 official) and Ndian (2 officials) in the South West Region. All in all, a total of 15 officials fled their posts: two Assistant Senior Divisional Officers, 12 Divisional Officers and one Assistant Divisional Officer. On 7 September 2018, the Secretary-General at the Presidency of the Republic, on the instructions of the President of the Republic, directed the Minister of Territorial Administration to reinstall these officials at their posts before 10 September 2018, at the latest.¹⁵

The scope of the abductions and assassinations by secessionist forces occurred with no control and no respect for the human person essentially because the secessionist fighters were in different groups; they were ill-disciplined with no political ideology except “restoration of our independence”; they had no central command; and, finally, most of the leaders and financiers were in the diaspora. Those who were on Ground Zero with the fighters, for the most part, hid their identity. Most of the Amba fighters were not well educated but they had the power of the gun. On 28 June 2019, the ADF secessionist fighters of the Alabakum Camp in Bamenda abducted the SDF Chairman, Ni John Fru Ndi, from his residence. He was accused of:

- i. Being a stumbling block to “the liberation struggle” because he refused to recall SDF senators and parliamentarians from the Senate and House of Assembly and Mayors out of the SDF controlled Councils;

15 Le Ministre, Secrétaire Général, Réf. No. 563/CF/SG/PR, “Réinstallation des autorités administratives du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest,” 7 septembre 2018 ; *The Guardian Post*, No. 1491, Thursday, 13 September 2018, 5.

- ii. Being responsible for the killing of a separatist fighter in Baba II, Santa Sub-Division; and,
- iii. Not having visited them.¹⁶

After having meted shabby treatment on Fru Ndi, the ADF fighters released him on Saturday, 29 June 2019. Earlier on 25 June 2019, Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua of the Archdiocese of Bamenda was kidnapped around Belo on his return from a pastoral mission to Wum, Menchum Division; he was released after 24 hours.

The atrocities committed by secessionist fighters against the national defense and security forces reached its most despicable and shocking level with the assassination of 46-year-old Florence Ayafor in October 2019. Florence Ayafor, a warder at the Bamenda Central Prison, was kidnapped on 29 September 2019 on her return from Pinyin, Bamenda, where she attended a funeral. She was sexually abused; her naked body was dragged on the ground; she was gruesomely murdered and then beheaded. A video, prepared by the secessionist fighters depicting her assassination sent shock-wave and condemnation in-and-out of Cameroon. In early 2020, two of Florence Ayafor's murderers, Innocent Niba Akuma (born on 4 August 1989 in Santa Njong in Mezam Division) and Roger Ngu (born on 15 October 1990 in Bamenda) were arrested and presented to the national and international press.¹⁷

The reckless abductions and mal-treatment of Anglophones by secessionist fighters pricked the conscience of Ebenezer Akwanga, leader of SOCADEF, who, in a video released in April 2020, decried the atrocities committed by "his fighters" and other secessionist fighters. According to him, Ambazonian fighters were:

Bandits, armed robbers... [who] have become thieves... steal from our people and ...are building houses [with ransom money] [They] bring women to the camp and take them to become sexual balloons. How could you be in the camp fighting and you spend your time getting girls pregnant. And definitely you are raping them... because they are scared of the gun. ...You don't have hospital [s]; where will they deliver those children....¹⁸

The attacks and threats continued unabated. For instance, on 10 May 2020, Ambazonian separatist fighters lured Mayor Princley Ojong Ashu of Mamfe into a trap when they

¹⁶ *The Post*, No. 2016, Monday, 01 July 2019, 5; *The Star*, vol. 2, No. 537, Monday, 01 July 2019, 2-3.

¹⁷ The macabre video of her gruesome murder which was prepared by her assassins clearly showed seven men including Innocent Niba Akuma and Roger Ngu; they did not attempt to mask themselves in order to conceal their identities.

¹⁸ *The Herald Tribune*, No. 053, Monday, 06 April 2020, 3.

claimed that they wanted to lay down their arms. Ojong Ashu, with two lightly armed police officers, travelled to his home village, Eshobi, to meet the separatist fighters but they brutally gunned him down near Eshobi. On 20 May 2020, Cameroonians were taken aback when a secessionist, reportedly living in the diaspora, released an audio in which he threatened Archbishop Andrew Nkea¹⁹ of the Bamenda Archdiocese. In the audio, the secessionist warned the archbishop “that his days are numbered” and called on all the “ground fighters to blow off his head.”²⁰ The Christian community and the population at large condemned the senseless and untoward threat on the life of the Archbishop. The so-called Interim Government of Ambazonia issued a communiqué which condemned the threat saying:

Such threats ... [are] unwise and unacceptable ... [and called on those involved] to desist with immediate effect.... An attack on the archbishop... is a blunder of unparalleled proportion. Self-defense forces must keep their eyes on the enemy... [and Archbishop Nkea] is not one of them. He has been at the forefront of humanitarian efforts during this crisis....²¹

The pastoral counsel of Cardinal Christain Tumi²² on the Canonical Possession of the Metropolitan See of Bamenda on Saturday, 22 February 2020, was very befitting. Cardinal Christian Tumi wrote: “... you [Archbishop Nkea] also come to Bamenda at a very trying moment in the life of the Church and the people you are called to be

19 Archbishop Andrew Nkea was ordained a Priest in 1992 and became the Bishop of the Mamfe Diocese in 2013. He became Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Bamenda in February 2020 when he took over Canonical Possession of the Metropolitan See of Bamenda.

20 Yerima, “Interim Government Statement.”

21 Ibid.

22 Cardinal Christian Tumi (born in Kikaikilaki in Bui Division in October 1930 and died in April 2021) studied in Cameroon, Nigeria, France and Switzerland. He was ordained priest of the Roman Catholic Church in April 1966 by Bishop Jules Peeters in Buea. He was appointed Bishop of Yagoua in the Far North Region of Cameroon in 1979 and later Archbishop of Garoua in the North Region. He was created Cardinal in June 1988 by Pope John Paul II and was moved to Douala as the Archbishop. He was an uncompromising advocate for a just society and he defended the rights of the oppressed, suppressed and marginalized.

He stood for the truth and never wavered. He condemned the corruption of the Biya government, electoral malpractices and the disrespect of fundamental human rights in Cameroon. He actively participated in the Major National Dialogue and chaired one of the Commissions. His strong language against the glaring shortcomings of the government was not welcomed by the government. He was once abducted by the armed separatists, Amba fighters, in November 2020 and released after spending a tortuous and difficult night with his abductors.

shepherd over. Do not be frightened by the socio-political crisis; but remain a pastor to all....”²³

On 31 May 2020, Amba fighters struck another innocent Anglophone, Gabriel Makia Akwo. An Elder of PCC Congregation Kumba, Makia Akwo was gunned down by Amba fighters at Ikiliwindi in Konye Sub-Division, Meme Division, en route to Momo Division to arrange for his wedding. The separatist fighters confirmed that they shot at his RAV4 Toyota vehicle thinking that he was carrying soldiers; one more senseless death. On 13 July 2020, Amba fighters struck again when they abducted 63 young boys and girls in Fossimondi, a village in Alou sub-division in Lebialem Division. The Amba fighters were reportedly loyal to “General” Ayeke of the Alou Guerrilla Fighters. The abduction of the boys and girls was roundly condemned by the Fons and youths of Lebialem who stated that the “separatists [were] answerable to Christopher Anu.”²⁴

The heinous assassination executed by Amba fighters showed its ugly head again on 11 August 2020 at Makanga in Muyuka with the savage assassination of Comfort Tumassang. Comfort Tumassang, a 35-year old mother of four children was beheaded by Amba fighters led by “Commander Charger.” Her corpse, oozing with blood, was dragged and dumped on the road. The entire macabre was videoed by her assassins who accused her of being a traitor and a black leg because she was seen in the company of a military officer. Her brutal and inhumane assassination was widely condemned by several human rights groups and women organisations. In the South West Region, women groups demonstrated on 11 August 2020 calling for peace and a return to normalcy. They marched from Bongo Square in Buea to the Governor’s Office. They chanted and carried placards which read: “Respect life, defend women and girls, [and] stop the killing;” “Her choice of partner should not determine her fate: her partner is her choice;” and, “we want women’s voices and not dead bodies in the media.”²⁵

Meanwhile, the national defence and security forces descended on the population of Muyuka shortly after the assassination of Tumassang and whisked off about 400 people (young and old, men and women) to the Gendarmerie Station in Buea for interrogation; most of them were later released. As a follow-up, the national defence forces attacked Amba fighters in Ikata, in Muyuka Sub-Division, and four suspected Amba fighters were killed. On 1st September 2020, the Minister of Women’s Empowerment and the Family organized a march of about 200 women in Yaounde and they converged at the

23 Christian Cardinal Wiyghan Tumi, “Goodwill Message from His Eminence Christian Cardinal Tumi,” *Taking Canonical Possession of the Metropolitan See of Bamenda*, February 2020, 6.

24 *The Chronicle Times* (Bi-Weekly), No. 0022, Monday, 20 July 2020, 1.

25 *Cameroon Tribune*, Wednesday/Mercredi, August 19 Aôut 2020, No. 12160/8359, 2.

esplanade of the Town Hall. The women decried the heinous killings of women stating: “We as the mothers of this nation say no to the killings, we say no to school boycott, we say no to our children wasting their valuable lives in the bushes. We say yes to peace, progress and unity.”²⁶

Secessionist fighters did not restrict their abductions only to Anglophones and the assassination of Anglophone civilians and members of the national defense and security forces. They also fought amongst themselves. For instance, SOCADEF led by Ebenezer Akwanga from the USA, captured and killed several secessionist fighters in Munyenge, Muyuka sub-division. Similarly, the ADF of Cho Ayaba killed several rival secessionist fighters in Guzang and Batibo in Momo division. The killings of secessionist fighters by their comrade-in-arms were vividly captured by *The Guardian Post* in an article headlined: “Diaspora Ambazonia activists trade insults, threats after deadly clashes between separatist groups.”²⁷

In September 2020, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) produced two reports on the atrocities in the two regions: one on the atrocities committed by the armed secessionists, separatists, in the North West and South West Regions; and, the other on the atrocities committed by the national defence and security forces. The 12-page report by CHRDA accused the armed secessionist forces of having “ceaselessly kidnapped, tortured, and maimed unarmed civilians.” The armed separatists (Amba fighters), according to the report, carried out “deadly attacks against the military within civilian residential areas which often result [ed] in casualties.”²⁸ The CHRDA backed up its report with examples provided by survivors, eye-witness accounts and photographs. In October 2020, armed secessionist fighters, once more, unleashed their barbaric heinous attacks on soft targets in the North West and South West Regions as if they wanted to give more credence to the CHRDA Report.

Kumba Massacre, 24 October 2020

On Saturday, 24 October 2020, students of Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Fiango, Kumba, were attacked as they were studying in their classrooms. Amba fighters entered one of the classrooms and gunned down six students and seriously wounded 13 others; a seventh student later died in the hospital.²⁹ The only

26 Crtv.cm, “NW/SW: Women leaders call for end to atrocities,” 01 September 2020.

27 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1560, Wednesday, 19 December 2018, 8-7.

28 Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA), “A Report on Atrocities Committed Against Civilians By Armed Separatist Fighters Between May and August,” Buea, September 2020. Some of the cases in the “Report” are described in this publication.

29 The deceased children were: Princess Nguemone (12 Years old); Che Tehma Nchangnwi (11 years old); Jennifer Anamgim (12 years old); Victory Camibon (10 years old); Shenja Syndi (12 years old);

“crime” the students committed was that they were in school studying following the reopening of classes for the 2020/2021 academic year on 5 October 2020. The attack was very revolting because it occurred in broad daylight and the population watched it as if they were watching a movie and they were too scared to intervene.

The dead and wounded students were rushed to the hospitals in Kumba and Buea; with the NGO Doctors without Borders credited for their prompt response in assisting with the evacuation of the dead and wounded. Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe attributed the attack to Ikome Sako’s IG. The barbaric and heinous Kumba Massacre was roundly condemned by Cameroonians of all political coloration; all linguistic, professional and ethnic groups; Churches; the Cameroon government; and, the Pope expressed similar disbelief, shock and condemnation. The international bodies and embassies in Cameroon sent out their recycled condemnations against atrocities committed in the North West and South West Regions and also reaffirmed their call for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through dialogue. The *Guardian Post* spoke for most Cameroonians when it headlined: “Unpardonable Cruelty, barbarism;” it and went on to describe Anglophones as the “highest victims of illusive independence struggle.”³⁰ Thousands of women in the North West and South West Regions demonstrated peacefully against the assassination and they wept in typical tradition of the two regions.

In a shocking headline by *The Post WeekEnder* titled “STOP THE WAR: Hired Protesters, Commercial Mourners Can’t End Cameroon’s Bloodbath,”³¹ most Cameroonians felt that the newspaper lacked empathy and that it was an insult to the dignity of the murdered school children, the grieving families and all Cameroonians who grieved with the bereaved families. For instance, *The Chronicle Times* Bi-Weekly titled its Friday, 30 October 2020 edition: “Don’t Trivialise Mothers’ Pains”³² and the *Municipal Updates* titled the reaction from women: “We Were Not Hired To Protest: Bamenda Women Speak Out.”³³ The South West/ North West Women Taskforce (SNWOT) and the South West Women for Peace and Development Network (SWWOPDEN) condemned the barbaric act and demanded an immediate ceasefire of the senseless armed conflict.

The Cameroon Bar Association (CBA), through its interim President Barrister Claire Atangana Bikouna, also condemned the heinous attacks and declared that: “No fight, no cause, no argument can justify this odious, barbaric, criminal, and cowardly

Rema Zakame (09 years old); and, Ngwane Remmy Munge (12 years old).

30 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1998, Monday, 26 October 2020, 1.

31 *The Post WeekEnder*, No. 02137, Friday, 30 October 2020, 1.

32 *The Chronicle Times*, Bi-Weekly, No. 0032, Friday, 30 October 2020, 1.

33 *Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 0112, Friday, 30 October 2020, 1.

act.”³⁴ Barrister Bikouna called on all lawyers to observe a minute of silence on Tuesday, 27 October 2020, at the start of each hearing in memory of the slain children and the quick recovery of the wounded victims.³⁵ But, the most forceful condemnation of the murder of the school children and also an extension of sympathy to the bereaved families and wounded victims came from Pope Francis on 28 October 2020. In a statement on Wednesday, 28 October 2020, during his General Audience, the Pope said:

I join in the grief of the families of the young students brutally killed last Saturday in Kumba, Cameroon. I feel great dismay at such a cruel and senseless act, which tore life from innocent little ones while they were taking lessons at school. May God enlighten the hearts, so that similar actions are never repeated again and so that the tormented North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon can finally find peace! I hope that weapons are silenced and that the safety of all and the right of each young person to education and to a future can be guaranteed. I express my affection to the families, the city of Kumba and all of Cameroon and invoke the comfort that only God can give.³⁶

On 28 October 2020, President Biya signed a decree which declared Saturday, 31 October 2020 “a day of national mourning” and the national flag was “flown at half-mast all day long throughout the national territory.”³⁷ On Saturday, 31 October 2020, an ecumenical service was held in Kumba to pray for the peaceful repose of the souls of the children. The Paramount Ruler of Kumba and the Bafaw, Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko took to the streets with about 1,000 women and protested against the gruesome assassination of their children.³⁸ On Thursday, 5 October 2020, another ecumenical service was held in Kumba in the presence of Prime Minister Dion Ngute for the murdered children.

In order to follow up words with action, an association in Atlanta, Georgia, “The K-Town Association of Atlanta”, donated \$4,000 to the seven bereaved families through His Royal Highness Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko, the Paramount Chief of the Bafaw of Kumba, and other donors added \$2,000 for a total of \$6,000.³⁹ Nfon Mukete IV extended the condolences of the K-Town Association to the bereaved families and prayed “them

34 Cameroon-info.net (accessed on 26 October 2020).

35 Ibid.

36 *The Chronicle Times*, Bi-Weekly, No. 0031, Thursday, 29 October 2020, 3.

37 Decree No. 2020/684 of 28 Oct 2020 to declare a day of national mourning; see *Cameroon Tribune*, No. 12212/8411, Friday/Vendredi, October 30 Octobre 2020, 4-5; and, *Cameroon Tribune*, No. 12213/8412, Monday/Lundi, November/02 Novembre 2020, 2-6

38 *The Sun*, No. 0624, Thursday, 05 November 2020, 3.

39 Ibid.

to take heart and look only on the Almighty God.” The Kumba City Mayor, Gregory Mewanu, added that “These innocent children are sitting on the right hand of God, for they did nothing to deserve such untimely death.”⁴⁰ The Cameroon government paid all the mortuary and hospital bills for the deceased and the wounded. The government vowed to track down the perpetrators of the heinous crime.

On 7 February 2021, the brain behind the massacre of the school children, Augustine Ambe popularly known as “General above the Law” who headed a secessionist armed group known as the Fako-Meme Black Tar Council and the “Real Borns,” was killed during a military operation in the Mbalangi locality in Meme Division. In the course of the operation, another separatist leader, Celestin Wanshe, known as “T-Boy,” and three Amba fighters were also killed. This was after Amba fighters had attacked the military at Mbalangi and wounded several soldiers. Later, some of the perpetrators were arrested. On 7 September 2021, the military court in Buea sentenced four of those arrested to death for acts of terrorism, assassination and attempted secession; four others were sentenced to five months in jail; and, four others were acquitted.

Dark Month of November 2020

The month of November 2020 was characterized by daring spectacular attacks and abductions of students, teachers and revered personalities in the two crisis-hit regions by Amba fighters. On Tuesday, 3 November, the Bui Warriors who were sponsored by the Sako IG attacked the Presbyterian Primary School and the Presbyterian Comprehensive High School in Kumbo and abducted students and teachers; the students were later released but eleven teachers were retained. The following day, 4 November, students of Government Bilingual High School Fundong in Boyo Division were kidnapped. They were later released after a joint operation by the sacred society of Mbam village, motor bike riders and the military.

On 5 November, the Ngoketunjia Restoration Forces (NRF) led by the dreaded Julius Benengweh, “Babessi Must obey Me,” which operated under the banner of the Ambazonia Restoration Forces (ARF) teamed up with the Bui Warriors (BUIWA) and abducted the Fon of Nso, His Majesty Sehm Mbinglo II, alongside His Eminence Christian Cardinal Tumi at Babessi. The Fon and his entourage were abducted as they were returning to Kumbo from Yaounde. The Fon had been forced by BUIWA to take refuge in Yaounde where he stayed for several months. The NRF and BUIWA released Cardinal Tumi on 6 November after having instructed him to inform “the Ambazonian people” that he had resigned as the President of the Major National Dialogue (MND) Commission on Refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples. The ARF also gave Cardinal

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Tumi two demands to convey to President Biya:

- a) Biya should release all Ambazonian prisoners of war beginning with Sisiku Ayuk Tabe; and,
- b) The Cameroon government should stop all activities in Ambazonia and withdrew all its military forces.⁴¹

The abduction of Fon Mbinglo II and Cardinal Tumi shocked Cameroonians and more especially the people of Nso (because of the Fon) and Christians and especially Catholics (because of the Cardinal).

The sons and daughters of Nsaw in-and-out of Cameroon demanded the immediate release of the Fon. The leaders of the Bui Family Union (BFU), USA; the Nso Family Union (NFU) in Johannesburg in South Africa; the Bui Family Union (BFU) in Cape Town, South Africa; and, the Nso Family Union (NFU), Europe, deplored “the kidnapping in the strongest possible terms” and “the intimidation and kidnappings that have continued to hold our people captive.” These unions called “on the captors to unconditionally release the Fon and ensure he returns with his entourage to his Palace” in Kumbo, Bui Division.⁴² On 10 November 2020, the Fon was released and whisked off to Bamenda and not to his Palace in Kumbo. But he, later, returned to his Palace in Kumbo and voted in the 6 December 2020 Regional Council elections. He decried the fact that the armed separatists had ruined Bui and reiterated his support for a united Cameroon. In the early hours of 6 December 2020, the notorious and dreaded Julius Benengweh, “Babessi Must obey Me,” was killed by the military.

In the South West Region, after the heinous crime styled “The Kumba Massacre”, Amba fighters who called themselves the “Omega Squad” stormed the Kulu Memorial College in Limbe. The secessionists attacked students and teachers and forced them to undress naked. The fighters set some classrooms and offices ablaze. According to the secessionists, they burnt “the offices and classrooms in furtherance of their school-boycott agenda.”⁴³ On 6 November, Amba fighters murdered the traditional ruler of Liwu-la-Malale, His Majesty Francis Nangoh Molinga, in his palace which they set ablaze. The tense insecure climate in certain parts of the two Anglophone regions did not deter the government from organising regional elections throughout the ten regional headquarters on Sunday, 6 December 2020. This was against the background

41 Cameroonnewsagency.com (accessed 8 November 2020).

42 “Joint Statement from Nso Community Leaders in the USA, South Africa and Europe,” Friday, 6 November 2020.

43 *The Sun*, No. 0624, Thursday, 05 November 2020, 2.

of threats and intimidations from secessionists warning electors to abstain from voting or face death.

The 6 December 2020 Regional Council elections provided another opportunity for separatist fighters to brutalize and even assassinate Anglophones. For instance, the councillor of Widikum, Elias Ancho Ambi, was assassinated by separatist fighters because he voted in the elections. Rev. Father Anthony Viban and a seminarian were attacked at Mile 7 Akum as they were en route to Alateneng to celebrate Holy Mass to Catholic Christians. The month of December 2020 ended with the assassination of the Chief of Dibanda, Chief Ikome Ngale, and the Team Manager of Young Sports Academy (YOSA), Alphonse Akwa Ndifon, on 21 December by separatist forces. The year 2021 started with the grim reminder that the Anglophone crisis was far from over.

On 6 January 2021, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted by Amba fighters in Njikwa Sub-Division, Momo Division, hit a military convoy transporting soldiers and civilians who were returning from an official ceremony. Five soldiers and the Momo Divisional Delegate for Communication, Rebecca Liwusi Jeme, were killed.⁴⁴ The calm and socio-political serenity which was expected to accompany the regional council elections and installation of the respective regional executive councils never materialized as atrocities committed by Amba fighters and the national defence and security forces continued unabated.

In Ndian Division, the Manager of Lobe Pamol Estate, Eric Bakia, and three Pamol workers were abducted by Amba fighters; Bakia was assassinated and the three workers were released after their fingers were cut off. On the night of 13 February 2021, Lekeaka Oliver, "Field Marshal", led his marauding armed group, the Red Dragons of Lebialem, and abducted four chiefs of Lebialem. The chiefs were: Forzizong of Mbrah village, Fomin Nkengncha of Ndung-ngoh village, Fonchenallah of Nchanallah village and Fualeasuoh of Aleshesuoh village. Chief Fuambe of Agweh village, fortunately, escaped from the marauders. The abducted chiefs were taken to the Abebuoh Market Square at Nchen Essoh-Attah and three of them were assassinated.⁴⁵

The Lebialem elite and part of the population believed that Lekeaka carried out the assassination "under the instructions of his senior brother Christopher Anu who lives in the USA." Eric Tataw also blamed Christopher Anu and "Field Marshal" Oliver Lekeaka for the assassination of the three chiefs.⁴⁶ According to the Lebialem elite, the

44 *The Sun*, No. 0632, 07 January 2021, 2.

45 *The Guardian Post*, No. 207, Monday, 15 February 2021, 5.

46 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2091, No. 2091, Wednesday, 10 March 2021, 1. Eric Tataw was one of the notorious frontline separatist leaders in the USA. He instructed his followers in the North West and

chiefs were abducted because they “refused to hand over the proceeds from the sales of cocoa for the 2020/2021 season” and encouraged “other villagers not to succumb to pressure from the gang.” In addition, according to the elite, the chiefs were accused of “organizing schools in the villages...”⁴⁷ It was no secret, however, that Amba fighters and their sponsors in the diaspora had warned municipal councillors, fons and chiefs to boycott the 6 December 2020 regional elections or face death.

On the night of Sunday, 14 February 2021, the military attacked the Red Dragons in the locality of Abebue in Lebialem Division. In the course of the operation, Lekeaka and other members of the Red Dragons escaped but his deputy, Ambrose Fontem, was apprehended and 27 boys whom Lekeaka had kidnapped were rescued.⁴⁸ “Field Marshal”, it was reported, kidnapped the boys in order to take them to reinforce the team of Amba fighters in Kupe Manenguba Division. Still on Sunday, 14 February 2021, Amba fighters in Boyo Division kidnapped Fon Clement Ndi II of Kom around Fujua in Fundong Sub-Division on his return from Njinikom where he had attended Church Service. The Amba fighters accused him of the following “sins”:

- i) He allowed members of the national defence and security forces to guard him to Njinikom and back;
- ii) He stopped briefly at the home of Mayor Denis Awoh Ndong of Fundong, a state authority; and,
- iii) He cooperated and collaborated with state authorities.

According to *The Sun*, Mayor Ndong led “over 4,000 inhabitants of Fundong to storm the Amba camp in Abuh to demand the release of the Fon.”⁴⁹ Amba fighters, however, got wind of the impending attack and the Fon was released unharmed before the Ndong-led “stormtroopers” could get to Abuh and match words with action.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, in Kumbo, Amba fighters killed Captain Ngwebe Ongba in an ambush on 15 February 2021. Although Kumbo Central Town experienced relative calm in early 2021, separatist fighters controlled the following localities and imposed their rule on them: Meluf, Tarkijah, Dzendzev and Kikaikilaki. In the South West Region, the senseless abductions and killings continued in Ndian Division.

South West Regions to abduct those who went against their instructions. He called on his followers to cut off the hands and fingers of those whom they abducted and even murder them.

47 Paul Tasong, *Radio/Press Announcement*, 15 February 2021, Yaounde.

48 *The Post Weekender*, No. 02162, Friday, 19 January 2021, 7.

49 *The Sun*, No. 0638, Wednesday, 24 February 2021, 9.

50 Ibid.

On 15 June 2021, Amba fighters in Ndian Division who were reportedly led by “General” 10 Kobo abducted six senior civil servants in the division: the Divisional Delegate of the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development; the Divisional Delegate of Housing and Urban Development; the Divisional Delegate of Water and Energy; the Divisional Delegate of State Property and Land Tenure; the Divisional Delegate of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises; and, the Divisional Chief of Taxes. These senior civil servants were on an official mission to demarcate land for an electricity supply plant-project in the area.

The armed secessionists demanded tens of millions Frs. CFA for the release of the abducted officials. Chris Anu, Communication Secretary for the secessionist-declared Republic of Ambazonia, confirmed that the six officials were abducted by the ARF. He, however, said that they were not “abducted” but rather “arrested” because they trespassed into Ambazonian territory; of course, they were abducted. The Divisional Delegate for Economy, Planning and Regional Development, Mabia Johnson, was later executed by his captors.⁵¹ In July 2021, Fon Peter B. Choh of Baforkum in Bambui, Mezam Division, was killed by Amba fighters after they had held him captive for about two months.⁵² On 18 July 2021, armed secessionist fighters ambushed and killed five police constables in Njenka, Bali Sub-Division.

On Sunday, 22 August 2021, Presbyterian Christians who were worshipping in the Presbyterian Church Ntanfoang in Bali were caught in an exchange of gun fire between armed secessionists and the national defence and security forces. According to a *Press Release* by the House of Chiefs, North West Regional Assembly, dated 23 August 2021, the attack was “perpetrated by unidentified individuals during a church service.”⁵³ The PCC, in her communiqué, avoided throwing light on the perpetrators. It merely explained that “Church Service was in session...when suddenly there was a loud explosion outside close to the Church House followed by random gun shots;” in the course of which a female Christian, Grace Titalabit, was killed and the Pastor, Rev. Simon Voma Montoh, and several others were wounded.⁵⁴ The Cameroon military, however, held the armed secessionists responsible for the gun battle.

The military explained that “elements of the Defence and Security Forces on routine patrol on the BATIBO-WIDIKUM highway stopped at the Ntanfoang junction” [Emphasis in

51 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2171, Thursday, 17 June 2021, 1,3; *The Chronicle Times*, No. 059, Monday, 21 June 2021,1; and, *The Guardian Post*, No. 2176, Wednesday, 23 June 2021,1.

52 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2192, Monday, 12 July 2021, 1, 7.

53 The House of Chiefs, North West Regional Assembly, *Press Release*, 23 August 2021.

54 Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Communiqué on the Incident at Presbyterian Church in Ntanfoang-Bali, 22 August 2021, Buea.

original] near the Presbyterian Church. Amba fighters, the military *Press Release* went on, shot at the security forces. In the course of the exchange of gunshots, the Rev. Pastor was wounded and Grace Titalabit was killed.⁵⁵ The attack of the Presbyterian Church drew swift condemnations from the general public and the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province. The armed secessionists in Bali, the Buffalo Fighters, led by “General Grand Pa” banned all Presbyterian Church services in Bali Nyonga until the PCC Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Fonki, and Rev Pastor Montoh resigned. The separatists accused them of refusing to blame the military for the gunshots that resulted in the death of Grace Titalabit and several worshippers wounded. On Sunday, 5 September 2021, Rt. Rev. Fonki advised all PCC pastors to leave Bali Nyonga.

Even before Cameroonians could digest the senseless shooting around PCC Ntanfoang Bali, on Monday, 23 August 2021, “General” No Pity led about 80 Amba fighters and attacked Elak, Oku. The handful of elements of the national defence and security forces were chased away in broad daylight. “General” No Pity and his men arrogantly patrolled Elak; they set several vehicles and houses ablaze; set part of the market on fire; burnt the mayor’s house; and, dared the military to come out of their hideout.⁵⁶ It was a humiliating scene for the national defence and security forces, to say the least. On 28 August 2021, secessionist fighters struck in Ndian Division again and killed two members of the national defence and security forces at Lipenja during a 30-minute gun battle. In less than 72 hours, the fighters hit again when they ambushed and killed two military officers in Mundemba.

On Sunday, 29 August 2021, Amba fighters abducted the Vicar-General, Mgr. Julius Agbortoko, of the Diocese of Mamfe. According to a *Press Release* from the Chancellor of the Diocese of Mamfe, Mgr. Julius Agbortoko returned from Kokobuma where he went on pastoral visitation. About 30 minutes after he arrived at the residence of Bishop Emeritus Lysinge in the St. John Paul II Major Seminary in Bachuo Ntai, Mamfe, “some young men who identified themselves as separatist fighters bumped” in and took Mgr. Agbortoko away “whom they considered younger and stronger than the Bishop emeritus.”⁵⁷ The separatist fighters demanded 20 million Francs CFA for his release.⁵⁸ The Interim Government (IG), on 30 August 2021, issued a *Press Release* signed by Dabney Yerima which “forcefully condemns the thoughtless and criminal act [and] call[s] for those involved to ... immediately [release the Vicar-General]

55 Ministry of Defence, *Press Release*, No. 00654/CP/MINDEF/019 of 23 August 2021, Yaounde.

56 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2225, Tuesday, 24 August 2021, 1 and 3.

57 Diocese of Mamfe, “Re: Another Priest of Mamfe Abducted,” MD/PE/2-2/2021/02, 30 August 2021.

58 Ibid. Earlier in May 2021, Amba fighters kidnapped Rev. Fr. Christopher Eboka of the Diocese of Mamfe; he was released after several weeks in captivity.

without preconditions.”⁵⁹ Although the IG took “a strong view against kidnappings in the Federal Republic of Ambazonia,”⁶⁰ it was an open secret that most of its officials condoned, encouraged and even advocated the killings of those whom they branded as collaborators, enablers or blacklegs. Mgr. Agbortoko was later released unhurt after 72 hours in captivity.

On Wednesday, 10 November 2021, the shameful disregard for education and the right of children to education by the armed secessionists was demonstrated, once more, when an explosive device exploded in Amphitheatre 600 of the University of Buea as students were receiving lectures; 11 students were injured. The “Buea Ghosts”, an armed secessionist group, claimed responsibility for the act. In the North West Region, the armed secessionists took a step further in erasing the culture and tradition of the people of Baligham. In effect, on Sunday, 14 November 2021, ADF fighters invaded Baligham in Santa Sub-division and burnt down the palace of the Fon which housed the cultural and traditional symbols of authority of the people. They also burnt down shops, stores, bars and motels. In the process, they tortured the population, forced them to eat raw pepper and carted away motorbikes and huge sums of money from the helpless traders.⁶¹ In the midst of all these atrocities, condemnations against the heinous acts perpetrated by the secessionists were generally muted unlike those against the military.

On 24 November 2021, armed secessionists stormed the Government Bilingual High School Ekondo-Titi in Ndian Division when classes were going on. In the process, the secessionists murdered three students, namely: Emmanuel Orome (12 years old), Joyceline Ikem (16 years old) and Emmanuel Kum (17 years old). Five other students were seriously wounded. The wounded students were transported to the Regional Hospital Limbe for medical treatment, but one of them died en route which brought the number of students killed to four. The secessionists also killed a French language teacher, Celestine Song. The main reason for the senseless murder of the four high school students and their French teacher was their legitimate taste and search for education. The reaction and condemnation from the public was not swift but for the Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC) which issued a communiqué on 26 November condemning the murder.⁶² Almost a week later, the population of

59 *The Star*, No. 648, vol. 2, Monday, 30 August 2021, 2. Dabney Yerima is the Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2295, Monday, 15 November 2021, 1.

62 Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference (BAPEC), *Communiqué*, 26 November 2021, Bamenda. Celestine Fien Song was teaching French language to Form Two students when the armed secessionists attacked and killed her. She was a mother of four children and a native of Fundong Subdi-

Ndian condemned the killings and “ALL ACTS OF TERRORISM PERPETRATED BY SEPARATIST FIGHTERS” [Emphasis in original].⁶³ These condemnations did not, unfortunately, prick the consciences of Amba fighters.

In the early hours of Friday, 11 February 2022, Amba fighters led by a certain Orock of Okoyong village attacked and burnt down some dormitories of the Queen of the Rosary College (QRC), Okoyong, in Mamfe. The Queen of the Rosary College was founded in 1956 by Roman Catholic Reverend Sisters of Holy Rosary from Ireland as the first all-girls’ secondary school in Cameroon. It grew up to become a jewel of academic and moral excellence in the education of the girl child. The attack and burning down of some buildings of QRC shocked and revolted a cross-section of Anglophones. But, there was no doubt that the financiers and supporters of the secessionist struggle quietly applauded the heinous act although the Vice-President of the so-called Federal Republic of Ambazonia, Dabney Yerima, condemned the burning saying: “Any attack on a school in Southern Cameroons is shameful, distasteful, outrageous, and unacceptable. And the perpetrators of these sorts of crimes do not represent our cause and people.”⁶⁴

Another Ambazonian frontline leader, Mark Bareta, also criticized the burning of the dormitories saying:

This incident doesn’t represent this revolution at all. The basis for any struggle or revolution is to get a good community relationship between our people and the fighters.... [And] any struggle that doesn’t put the people at the heart is bound to fail.... A true Amba fighter should know that schools, churches, hospitals are no go areas.⁶⁵

Bareta called on Amba leadership “to fish out the attackers and treat them accordingly.”⁶⁶ The hypocrisy of the condemnation by Bareta who explained “that schools, churches... are no go areas” was exposed when he decried the successful celebration of the 56th Edition of National Youth Day activities in several divisional and sub-divisional headquarters in the North West and South West Regions on Friday, 11 February 2022. The splendid and colorful march pass by pupils and students revolted Bareta and he regretted that “they [the Cameroon government] are succeeding... and life has returned

vision, Boyo Division.

63 *The Chronicle Times*, No. 070, Monday, 29 November 2021, 1.

64 Dabney Yerima, “The Attack on Queen of the Rosary High School (QRHS), Okoyong, Manyu”, The Federal Republic of Ambazonia, 11 February 2022.

65 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2364, Monday, 14 February 2022, 3.

66 *Ibid.*

to normal in Lebialem. I have seen Youth day celebrations in.... We no longer have the effect we used to have in 2019.”⁶⁷

The Ambazonian Interim Government (IG) with Chris Anu as its Communication Secretary had called for the boycott of the celebrations of the 56th Youth Day slated for Friday, 11 February 2022 in the North West and South West Regions. These celebrations had been decreed throughout the national territory and the two Anglophone regions were part and parcel of the national territory. None of the frontline leaders objected when Anu made the announcement which called for the boycott. It was celebrated by pupils and students from private and public nursery educational institutions to tertiary educational institutions in the presence of administrative officials, ministers and political authorities in the various localities. The Youth Day activities were preceded by President Biya's Address to the youth on 10 February 2022. It should be pointed out that Youth Day celebrations became a yearly national event for youths in Cameroon from 1966.

Anu, on behalf of the IG, had warned parents and guardians to keep their children at home. It was rumoured that the students of QRC had earlier rehearsed their participation in the activities marking the celebrations slated for 11th February. The burning of the dormitories by Amba fighters, therefore, was to prevent them from participating in the Youth Day celebrations. It was a fulfillment of the threat issued by the IG; Yerima and Bareta merely shed crocodile tears. Of course, QRC was not the first educational institution whose buildings and equipment were burnt down by Amba fighters with the full support of frontline Amba leaders in the diaspora. In several cases, pupils and students were killed in classrooms. The condemnations by Yerima and Bareta were surely meant to calm the indignation of the international community and some of the financiers and supporters of the Amba cause led by their leaders in the diaspora. These leaders were instrumental in the call for boycott of classes and its enforcement.

Earlier in December 2021, Fon Kevin Teuvih Shumitang II of Bambalang who was the President of the North West House of Chiefs was abducted from his Palace by fighters loyal to “General No Pity;” they demanded a huge sum of money as ransom. On 13 January 2022, nine CDC workers in Tiko were abducted by Amba fighters while working on the CDC Rubber Plantation. The workers were released on 23 January 2022 after having been tortured. On January 2022, four teachers of the Government High School, Weh, in Menchum Division in the North West Region were kidnapped by armed separatist fighters. On 21 January 2022, four civilians were killed by Amba fighters in Tubah Subdivision in Mezam Division during a funeral. The fighters faulted

⁶⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/104954428492449/posts/244244601230097/> (accessed 11 February 2022).

the mourners for having organised the burial ceremony without having received the paid authorization from them.⁶⁸

On 2 March 2022, Amba fighters, using IEDs, ambushed a convoy led by the Divisional Officer (DO) of Ekondo-Titi (Timothée Aboloa) at Bokora in Ekondo-Titi. Aboloa was killed alongside the Mayor of Ekondo-Titi (Kenneth Nanji), the President of CPDM Section (William Ebeku), the driver (Stanley Meh) and Adjudant Akono. The DO and his delegation were on a contact tour within the jurisdiction of the DO. Amba fighters in Ndian Division, under the umbrella of Ndian Warriors led by “Field Marshal” 10 Kobo claimed responsibility for the attack. In April 2022, the ADF of the Bui Warriors struck home on 12 April 2022 when they brutally assassinated the brother (General Theodore Kigha) of Immaculate Kume, one of the Ambazonian spokespersons in the USA.⁶⁹ Kigha was the North West Regional Delegate for Penitentiary Administration and he was murdered alongside three other warders at Buh village in Nkum Subdivision, Bui Division, at the entrance to Kumbo. Kigha and the three warders were returning from Nkambe where he had presided over the official installation of the top penitentiary administrator in the division. On 30 April 2022, Amba fighters of the ADF took centre-stage, once more, in the conflict when they abducted Senator Regina Elizabeth Mundi.

Abduction of Senator Regina Elizabeth Mundi, 30 April 2022

Hon. Regina Elizabeth Mundi, a CPDM Senator from Mezam Division, was abducted by ADF Amba fighters on 30 April 2022 at Foncha Street in Bamenda in broad daylight. They took her to their hideout in Ashong in Batibo sub-division, Momo Division. They threatened to kill her; compelled her to announce her resignation as senator; and, forced her to call for the independence of the North West and South West Regions. Her abductors demanded ransom payment and the release of some of their detainees, especially Nfor Nfor Ngalla in the Yaounde Kondengui Prison in exchange for her release. The government reportedly rejected negotiations. It was alleged that her abductors were offered 80 million Frs. as ransom but the communiqué of the Cameroon Ministry of Defence was very silent on the issue of ransom. However, Ayaba Cho and Capo Daniel of the ADF alluded to ransom money but stopped short of saying that they collected ransom. Senator Mundi and her family members were also silent on the question of ransom.

68 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2344, Monday, 24 January 2022, 1.

69 Theodore Kigha sympathized with the SCNC and secretly supported the Ambazonian cause of secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions. He assisted Anglophones who were imprisoned on charges related to the activities of the SCNC and Ambazonian cause.

On 29 May 2022, according to a communiqué from the Cameroonian Ministry of Defence, the national defence and security forces, the BIR group, allegedly launched an attack on the ADF hideout in Ashong where Senator Regina Mundi and several other hostages were held captive. In the course of the attack, the communiqué continued, Senator Mundi and several hostages were “rescued” on 30 May 2022; several ADF secessionists were killed; three secessionists were captured; and, several weapons were seized.⁷⁰ However, the circumstances of Senator Regina Mundi rescue, which she referred to as a “release” during an interview, as well as those of the other hostages were very obscure: the standard videos of the attack which the military usually released and the photos or videos of the destroyed Amba hideout were absent; and, the corpses of the dead Amba fighters as well as the several weapons which were reportedly seized were never displayed. The government version of the account on the “rescue” of Senator Mundi was not very accurate, to say the least. In fact, when the military approached the Amba hideout in Ashong, the three Amba fighters who guarded her escaped with her into the heart of the forest.

In the course of escaping from the military, the senator could not keep pace with the escaping fighters and they decided to abandon her. She trekked alone looking for a route out of the forest not knowing where she was until she saw some houses. She went to one of the houses and asked, in Pidgin English, for some food and shelter; the members in the house knew immediately that she was not from the village or any of the nearby villages because they hardly spoke Pidgin English in the villages in the locality. With trepidation, they received her and responded favourably to her requests for some food. Later, one of the ladies in the house was instructed to take her to a military/security post at the outskirts of the village.

The lady informed the military who went and took Senator Mundi and helicoptered her out to Bamenda and then to Yaounde.⁷¹ In her first interview, she said that she was “released” and affirmed: “This region [North West] is at war, real war.”⁷² The ADF leaders blamed her release/rescue on those whom they termed “black legs” within their group who worked with the government. Ayaba Cho and Capo Daniel tried, unsuccessfully, to convince a skeptical public that money did not change hands in the release of Mrs.

⁷⁰ *Municipal Updates*, No. 277, Wednesday, June 1, 2022, 2; *The Guardian Post*, No. 2464, Wednesday, June 1, 2022, 1, 3; and, *Capitaine de Vaisseau* Cyrille Serge Atonfack Guemo, Chef Division Communication, *Ministère de la Défense*, Yaounde, 31 May 2022.

⁷¹ Exchanges between this author and a very close “sister” to Senator Regina Mundi following their conversation after her release on 30 May 2022, Monday, 6 June 2022; Joe Dinga Pefok, “Untold Story of How Senator Mrs. Mundi Came Out of Captivity in Ashong”, Unpublished write-up, 5 June 2022.

⁷² *The Herald*, No. 144, 08 June 2022, 1.

On Monday, 6 June 2022, “General No Pity” and his Fighters of the Marine Forces of Ambazonia abducted 14 Cameroonians in Noun Division. The next day, on the night of Tuesday, 7 June to Wednesday, 8 June 2022, “General No Pity” and his fighters attacked a gendarmerie security post at Njitapon in Kouoptamo subdivision in Noun Division. They killed five gendarme officers.⁷³ This was the deadliest attack by Anglophone secessionists on members of the national security and defence forces in any of the eight Francophone regions in Cameroon. On 8 June 2022, “armed individuals [Amba fighters] burst into Mamfe District Hospital... and set the entire building on fire.”⁷⁴ The Minister of Public Health, in his *Press Release*, stated that “no loss of human life” was registered.⁷⁵ But the burning of the hospital, once more, showed the callous and beastly mentality of those who claimed they were fighting on behalf of Anglophones for the independence of the two English-speaking regions. In a desperate move to disrupt the effective take off of the 2022/2023 academic year, Amba fighters, on 6 September 2022, attacked a *Golden Express Agency* bus with 14 passengers on board at Mile 30 in Muyuka Sub-division. The attack left six passengers dead (one woman and five men) and eight wounded (six women and two men).⁷⁶ But, the attack did not hinder the effective resumption of classes for the 2022/2023 academic year in both regions.

Attack of St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Nchang-Mamfe, 16 September 2022

The emptiness of the *raison d’être* of the atrocities committed by armed secessionists and their supporters continued unabated when on 16 September 2022 Amba fighters attacked and burnt down St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Nchang, in Manyu Division. In the course of unleashing their atrocities, they abducted “five priests, [one] Religious Sister and two lay faithful” and took them into the forests of Nchang village.⁷⁷ The Bishop of the Diocese of Mamfe, His Lordship Aloysius Fondong Abangalo, condemned

73 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2472, Thursday, 9 June 2022, 1, 3.

74 Dr. Manaouda Malachie, Minister of Public Health, *Press Release*, No. 22/124/PR MOH, 9 June 2022, Yaounde.

75 *Ibid.*

76 Communiqué du Gouvernement, « Attaque du 06 septembre 2022, a Muyuka Région du Sud-Ouest », Yaounde le 07 septembre 2022. Those killed were Oba Dilonka, Tabi Enow, Achidi Abel, Yancho Francis Neba, Kenneth the driver and an unidentified male passenger.

77 Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference, General Secretariat, “Communiqué about the burning down of the St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Nchang, Mamfe Diocese and the kidnapping of Religious Personnel,” Saturday, 17 September 2022. Those abducted were: Rev. Fathers Cornelius Jingwa, Emmanuel A., Barnabas A., Job-Francis and Elias; Rev. Sister Jacinta; Miss Ekenedirichukwu, Miss Bright Blanche and Mr. Patrick Nkem.

the act in very strong terms. He described the abductors as “Catholic Christians-turned Amba fighters.”⁷⁸ The Anglophone community joined the Catholic Church in condemning the atrocity and the Bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province stated that the “unknown Gunmen... [had] crossed the red line and...’Enough is enough.”⁷⁹ The Pope added his “voice to the appeal of the Bishops... for the release of the people kidnapped....”⁸⁰

The armed secessionists asked for a ransom of \$100,000 (about 65million Frs. CFA) and later reduced it to \$50,000 (about 32.5 million Frs. CFA) but the authorities of the Catholic Church in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province stated its inability to pay. In mid October 2022, about five weeks in captivity, the kidnappers released a video showing the priests pleading for their release. On 22 October 2022, the “five priests, [one] Religious sister and [the] two lay faithful” were released. The spokesperson for the priests, in a video which was released, thanked the abductors for their hospitality and stated that no ransom was paid. Mark Bareta, however, stated that ransom was paid and admonished the Amba fighters in the following words: “They [the priests, the religious sister and the lay faithful] were kidnapped by amba boys and kept for over a month until 10 million Frs. ransom was paid. So this is what the ambazonia fight has turned into. God forbid evil.”⁸¹

On 23 October 2022, Bishop Aloysius Fondong acknowledged the release of all those who were kidnapped following the burning of St. Mary’s Church. He decried the disrespect of the human person. He was, however, silent on the issue of “ransom” but made the following intriguing statement: “Taking away the freedom of our brothers and sisters *in order to make money at all cost is inhuman...* and should be desist from by whoever engages in such” [Emphasis added].⁸² It was inconceivable that the priests would have said they were not well treated or that ransom was paid for their release when they were still in captivity and definitely were under duress. Such unacceptable acts by Amba fighters were not limited only to the Catholic Church for inter- and intra-Amba fighting and assassinations were not uncommon.

78 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2605, Monday, 24 October 2022, 1.

79 Bamenda Provincial Episcopal Conference, “Communiqué about the burning down.”

80 *Municipal Updates*, No. 357, Monday, 26 September 2022, 2.

81 BaretaNews.Com, 23 October 2022; <https://fb.watch/glf5nVHzXO/> (accessed, 23 October 2022). It should be recalled that Mark Bareta was one of the frontline leaders of the Ambazonia cause. Before the outbreak of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016, Bareta was in Belgium and moved to Britain after 2019.

82 Diocese of Mamfe, MD/TL/1-1/2022/003, “RE: The release of our priests, a religious, and three members of Christ’s lay faithful,” 23 October 2022.

Amba inter-and intra-fighting

The Amba groups experienced deadly inter-and intra-fighting. The armed secessionist groups such as 7 Kata, Buffalo of Bali, Mountain Lions and Bui Warriors as well as many Amba “Generals” and “Commanders” owed their loyalty, according to Cho Ayaba, to any of the two IGs (the Sako IG and the Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe IG) in exchange for money. The inter-and intra-fighting was, therefore, understandable. On 30 June 2021, for example, the notorious Hilary Nsom, “General Opopo,” of SOCADEF and two of his fighters were kidnapped and killed by Amba fighters of Mountain Lions based in Ekona.

In January 2022, in an attempt to stem the Amba vs. Amba massacre, “General No Pity” of the ADF appointed “General Mad Dog” as the “Supreme General” in Bui. “General No Pity” and the other “Generals” directed “General Insubu” of the ARF to operate under the command of “General Mad Dog” or face the consequences. “General Insubu” was not present at the meeting and his acceptance of the directive was, therefore, not guaranteed. “General Insubu” was known for his brutality in enforcing “ghost towns,” lockdowns and kidnappings. He also banned circulation between Ndonga and Mantung. In April 2022, “General Mad Dog” and the ADF killed “General Insubu” at Kikaikom, a locality in Kumbo, Bui Division.

National Defence and Security Forces and the Anglophone Problem/Crisis

The secessionist movements in the diaspora directed their minions and fighters in the North West and South West to eliminate members of the forces of law and order whom they accused of not supporting their “cause.” The response by the military and especially its Rapid Intervention Battallion (RIB) known as the *Brigade d’Intervention Rapide* (BIR), the gendarmerie and the police against secessionist activities was rendered difficult by the assistance which some members of the population gave the secessionist forces.

The assistance included supplying foodstuffs; supplying arms, ammunition and medicine; acting as informants; supplying illegal drugs such as Indian hemp, marijuana and tramadol; housing some of the fighters; and of course, financing the secession. In several instances, the military responded by “collective punishment” which meant the indiscriminate burning down of entire villages, houses, shops, etc. In May 2018, for instance, *The Post* reported that “some 63 villages have been razed to ashes in the North West and South West Regions... since the Anglophone Crisis... [and] a large number of Anglophones have been living in the forests since the escalation of the crisis....”⁸³

83 *The Post*, No. 01915, Friday, 25 May 2018, 7.

In other cases, government troops reportedly tortured and killed suspected terrorists and/or informants while the secessionists also assassinated suspected government informants. In July 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights spokeswoman, Ravina Shamdasani, told the VOA that:

The violent separatists, these armed groups are killing people, torching schools, carrying out kidnappings and extortion and all sorts of horrible human rights abuses to try to disrupt the situation.... The government's role should be to protect people in such horrible environment. Instead, the government is employing a heavy-handed response, which is not helping the situation.⁸⁴

The government dismissed the allegations of human rights abuses. However, credible eyewitnesses provided accounts of gross human rights abuses and killings by government troops in localities in Bui Division such as Njavnyuy where one Thomas Bongkiyung Biakaai was killed; Rodrick Kijika from Kichuriwun was also killed and the maltreatment and killing of some residents in Kikaikilaki in Kumbo and its surrounding areas in mid 2018 were indisputable. On 4 October 2018, a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, Gerard Akiata Anjiange, was shot dead by the military at the St. Therese's Church, Bamessing Quasi Parish Ndop. Secessionist fighters suffered a major blow on Friday, 21 December 2018, following the assassination of Ivo Mbah alias "General Ivo." One of the most outrageous atrocities committed by the military during the crisis occurred on 14 February at Ngarbuh, Ntumbaw in Donga-Mantung Division, in the North West Region.

Ngarbuh Massacre, 14 February 2020

On 14 February 2020, soldiers of the Motorised Infantry Battalion aided by members of the Fulani (precisely Mbororo) vigilante group attacked the village of Ngarbuh and killed about twenty-five persons including women and children. The government initially refused that its military was involved and under immense pressure from the national and international community for the truth, the government created an independent Commission of Inquiry.⁸⁵ The spokesperson of the government, Minister

84 Ravina Shamdasani, interview by VOA, 27 July 2018.

85 The following were members of the Independent Commission of Inquiry as observers:

- i. Chemuta Divine Banda (President of the national Commission on Human Rights and freedoms (NCHRF);
- ii. His Lordship George Nkuo, Bishop of the Kumbo Diocese;
- iii. Ahmadou Baba Sale, Imam of the Ntumbaw Central Mosque;
- iv. Mrs. Dighambong, née Mih Bibiana, Chief Executive Officer of Bihdulem Humanitarian

of Communication René Emmanuel Sadi, in a Press Release of 18 February 2020 said:

The alleged killing of twenty-two villagers including fourteen children by Cameroonian Defense and Security Forces in Ngarbuh is fake ... [and appealed] to all, so that everything possible may be done, not to stir up tensions as some do, but to unfailingly support every effort that can contribute to a return to peace, to normalcy and the consolidation of living together in the North-West and South-West Regions.⁸⁶

The government's explanation was not convincing based on credible eye-witness accounts narrated by the Bishop of the Diocese of Kumbo, His Lordship Bishop George Nkuo, and several Human Rights groups. On 25 February 2020, Human Rights Watch (HRW), for example, published its report on the massacre entitled "Cameroon: Civilians Massacred in Separatist Area." The HRW report accused the Cameroon military of the "murder of twenty-one civilians, including a woman and thirteen children in an armed attack ... in Ngarbuh... burning five homes, pillaging scores of other properties, and beating residents, accompanied by several members of the Mbororo Fulani ethnic group."⁸⁷

The report immediately attracted the government's wrath. The government vehemently rejected it as being "questionable" and said that it illustrated "The bad faith of these organizations [HRW] which are tirelessly determined to undermine the image of Cameroon and the stability of our institutions."⁸⁸ Unfortunately for the government, its criticisms of the HRW report and reports by other organisations and the Diocese of Kumbo collapsed like a house of cards when the report of the Commission of Inquiry was made public on 21 April 2020.

The Independent Inquiry Commission Report established that:

- i. Government military and its Fulani vigilante ally were responsible for the 14 February 2020 Ngarbuh massacre;
- ii. Ngarbuh was the secessionist terrorist centre and a logistics centre for the supply of arms, ammunition and fuel for Amba fighters in Bui Division and part of Ngoketunjia Division;

Association of Peace and Hope (BIHAPH);

- v. Chenwi Chrysantus Shu, Regional Secretary of NCHRF for the North West Region; and,
- vi. A UNO representative

86 *Cameroon Tribune*, Wednesday/Mercredi, February 19 Février 2020, No. 12036/8235, 3; see also *Cameroon Tribune*, Friday/Vendredi, February 28 Février 2020, No. 12043/8242, 6; *The Post*, No. 02072, Monday, February 17, 2020, 7.

87 *Cameroon Tribune*, Friday/Vendredi, February 28 Février 2020, 6.

88 *Ibid.*

- iii. The secessionist terrorist group was engaged in all sorts of abuses against the local population; and,
- iv. Based on Points (ii) and (iii) above the Defense and Security Forces had to attack the Ambas strong hold at Ngarbuh.⁸⁹

The Independent Inquiry Commission stated that after the massacre, the military tried to cover its atrocity by pouring fuel and setting the houses ablaze. According to the commission, ten children and three women were killed. But the Commission was silent on the total number of persons who were killed in the Ngarbuh Massacre.

Based on the findings, President Biya instituted disciplinary proceedings against Major Nyiangono and all the servicemen who participated in the Ngarbuh operation. In addition, Sergeant Baba Guilda, Gendarme Cyrille Sanding Sanding and private 1st Class Gilbert Haranga were arrested. Finally, legal proceedings were instituted against the members of the Fulani vigilante group who were involved in the military operation.⁹⁰ It was hoped that the government learnt from the Ngarbuh massacre. In February 2021, the Cameroon government provided eighty million francs CFA to the families of the 22 victims of the Ngarbuh massacre as compensation.⁹¹ However, not all military actions were condemned by the population. Some military actions which targeted Amba fighters were applauded by the population especially in localities where Amba fighters terrorized the population such as in Tole, Wotutu and Mamfe town in the South West Region; Ndop, Widikum, Ndu, Bali, Belo, Batibo and Bafut in the North West Region. But the most spectacular military operations against separatist fighters were in the North West Region.

Military purged Some Villages of Amba Fighters

In May 2020, the population of Bafut was relieved when a military force of 300 soldiers led by Colonel Alain Charles Matiang engaged the “7 Kata” secessionist group⁹² in a six-day military operation. The “7 Kata” fighters were dislodged from the luxurious Saddle Hill Ranch Hotel, Bafut, which they had transformed into their command post. At the end of the military operation, 15 dreaded “7 Kata” Ambazonian fighters were killed.⁹³

89 *Cameroon Tribune*, Wednesday/Mercredi, April 22 Avril 2020, No. 12080/8279, 2; *The Post*, No. 02089, Friday, April 24, 2020, 2.

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Eden*, No. 1197, Wednesday, 17 February 2021, 10.

92 The secessionist group “7 Kata” was notoriously famous for kidnapping, raping young girls and married women, stealing and killing. It was led by “General” Aladji (Ahadji).

93 *Municipal Updates*, vol. 3, No. 069, Tuesday, May 05, 2020, 2.

But, before the government could bask in the satisfaction of the “7 Kata” operation, *Equinox Television* reported on 2 June 2020 that journalist Samuel Abuwe Ajiekha, better known as Wazizi, died on 17 August 2019 while in military custody.⁹⁴ Ajiekha was arrested on 2 August 2019 on suspicion of collaborating with terrorist groups in Buea. The news of his death came as a shock to Cameroonians who believed that he was alive and he was awaiting trial. His death was confirmed by the Head of Communication Division in the Ministry of Defence, Commander Cyrille Serge Atonfack Guemo, on 5 June 2020. Commander Atonfack said that he died “as a result of a SEVERE SEPSIS” [Emphasis in original].⁹⁵ The death of Ajiekha in Yaounde while in military custody was roundly condemned by several political parties in Cameroon as well as various associations of journalists.

The military, nonetheless, continued with its operation to destroy Amba fighters and their camps and registered another successful operation in Santa Sub-division. In July 2020, about 450 soldiers commanded by Colonel Alain Charles Matiang attacked separatist camps in several villages in Santa country (Alatineng, Beba II, Mantung, Pinying, Bawock and Bamendakwe) killing 15 separatist fighters. The notorious separatist leader in the locality, “General Okoro,” was killed while another separatist commander, “General Bush,” was arrested. The military retrieved several weapons and ammunitions, *Odeshi*, motor cycles and 22 cows, amongst other items.⁹⁶

On Sunday, 6 September 2020, the dreaded separatist Lucas Fonteh Ndefru, alias “General Mad Dog,” who was also known simply as “The Beast,” was attacked at Ntasen, Nkwen, in Bamenda. “General Mad Dog” and his gang terrorised Bamenda first as criminals and after 2016 as terrorists. He and his gang reportedly attacked the Head Office of Mitanyen Cooperative Credit Union Limited, MitaCCUL, in Bamenda on 21 August 2020 and went away with an undisclosed sum of money. He was accused of killing more than 100 Cameroonians in Bamenda including his girlfriend, Ms Treasure, with whom he had a child. Almost all of those whom “General Mad Dog” killed were Anglophones who were generally branded as “blacklegs.”

The random despicable killings and abductions for ransom in Bamenda were facilitated by motorbike riders some of who were, erroneously, taken for law-abiding motorbike riders. Amba fighters successfully infiltrated motorbike rally spots and/or road junctions. These fake motorbike riders used their motorbikes to escape from the crime

94 Ministry of Defence, *Press Release No. 0355/cp/MINDEF/*, Yaounde, 05 Juin 2020.

95 *The Star*, vol. 2, No. 587, Monday, June 8, 2020, 2.

96 *The Voice*, No. 237, Monday, July 20, 2020, 1. It was reported that the cows belonged to Simon Achidi Achu, former Prime Minister and former Senator.

scene. In addition, they usually transferred their victims from one motorbike rider to another until they reached their hideouts. On 8 September 2020, in order to contain the situation, Brigadier-General Ekongwese Divine, Brigadier-General Nka Valere and Police Commissioner Gousmo Emile issued a joint *Press Release*. In the *Press Release*, the military informed the population of Bamenda that “a special operation to secure the city of Bamenda and its surrounding code-named “**Bamenda Clean**” [would go operational as] from Tuesday September 8/2020” [Emphasis in original].⁹⁷ The activities of the national defence and security forces occasioned severe condemnation from civil society and NGOs.

In the implementation of the policy of “Bamenda Clean,” four Amba fighters in Ngomham, Bamenda, were killed on 22 September 2020 when they tried to block the road. This was in addition to other “clean up operations” in Bamenda. The Cameroon Bar Association (CBA), however, in a *Press Release*, petitioned the Attorney-General for the North West Region and called “for the respect of rule and order by the forces of law and order in executing the operation.”⁹⁸ The CBA, nonetheless, recognized that the military operations were “in response to frequent attacks perpetrated by terrorists and criminals who carry out kidnapping, robbery of financial institutions and stores, looting, wanton killing of civilians and personnel of the Defense and Security Forces.”⁹⁹ In Lysoka, Buea Sub-Division of the South West Region, the story was similar but the circumstance was different.

In the early hours of 23 September 2020, the military, working on information from the population, raided Lysoka village and left five people dead: four alleged Amba fighters and a woman. It was believed that the four Amba fighters coordinated the abduction of civilians for ransom in collaboration with Amba fighters in Ekona, Muyuka Sub-Division. It was also reported that they collaborated with a notorious Amba fighter called “General Mendo Ze” who controlled Amba fighters from Lysoka to Ekona.¹⁰⁰ Of course, supporters and sympathizers of the secessionist cause condemned the Lysoka raid and accused the military of having killed “innocent and unarmed civilians.” It should be underscored that, in several instances, the military also killed genuine innocent civilians. The killings and disrespect of human rights were denounced by several human rights organisations.

97 “Press Release,” September 8/2020, Bamenda.

98 *The Guardian Post*, “Operation Bamenda Clean: Bar Council Indicts Military for rights Violation,” No. 1977, Friday September 25, 2020, 1.

99 Ibid.

100 It should be recalled that in 2018, several f Fako (Bakweri) Chiefs were kidnapped and one of them, Chief Mbanda of Lysoka, died while in captivity.

On 31 August 2020, for instance, the CHRDA published a 13-page report with detailed human rights abuses by the Cameroon military in the North West and South West Regions between May and August 2020. The report accused the military of “engaging in gross human rights violations” in their battle against secessionist fighters in the two regions. It also accused the military of “extra-judicial executions, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, looting and extortion, poor prison conditions, and inhumane and degrading treatment of detainees.” It went on to say that “Inhabitants have also seen their homes and villages burned down by the military...”¹⁰¹ It, amongst others, cited the killing of four unarmed men in Buea who were caught smoking cannabis; in Menchum, the report related that the military attacked civilian population.

The military’s cleansing operation dragnet caught Ayeke, popularly known as “General Man Pass Gun.” Ayeke wrecked terror in Wabane Sub-Division in Lebialem Division. He was a commander under “Field Marshal” Lekeaka but decamped and created his own armed separatist group called “The Gorilla Fighters of Alou.” On 13 October 2020, Ayeke was killed during a two-day military operation. In the course of the operation, 13 people including a baby and three girls of the ages of 16, 18 and 24 who were used as sex slaves were freed.

In more than one instances, the atrocities committed by the military in the course of battling the secessionists recalled the Ngarbuh Massacre. For instance, on 10 January 2021, the military attacked suspected secessionist positions in the locality of Mautu in Muyuka Sub-Division, Fako Division, under the control of “General” Spirito” and “General Gabonais.” Some Amba fighters were reportedly killed and weapons and munitions were recovered. During the military operation, however, about eight civilians were reportedly killed by the military. The Cameroon military dismissed the allegation that civilians were killed stating that the secessionists “conceived in their occult offices, a hotchpotch of gruesome images in a bid to blame our Defence Forces, for a blind massacre perpetrated in Mautu.”¹⁰² However, the account by the military was disputed by several reputable sources. According to CHRDA, “so many people were killed, including a grandmother and her grandchild. We do not know what that old woman and the innocent child did to deserve death”, the CHRDA report added.¹⁰³

In spite of the condemnations of the atrocities committed by the national defence and security forces from the Cameroon government, humanitarian NGOs and the

101 CHRDA, “Human Rights Violations Committed By the Military between May and August 2020 in the North-West (NWR) and South West (SWR) Regions of Cameroon,” September 2020, Buea.

102 Ministry of Defence, *Press Release*, No. 0030//CP/MINDEF/01, Yaounde, 11 January 2021. See also *The Guardian Post*, No. 2046, 12 January 2021, 3.

103 Statement by CHRDA, Buea, 11 January 2021.

international community, on 11 February 2021 the military arrested a certain Jean Fai Bongong in Ndu in Donga-Mantung Division. He was accused of being a relative to an Amba fighter. A shocking video which depicted the torture he was forced to undergo compelled the Divisional Officer for Ndu Sub-Division, Adamu Shuaibu Ibrahim, to send out a Radio-Fax-Message to the heads of Units of the national defence and security forces under his command saying:

FOLLOWING HORRENDOUS IMAGES OF INHUMANE TORTURE OF A CERTAIN JEAN FAI BONGONG OF NDU BY ELEMENTS OF YOUR RESPECTIVE FORCES ON 11TH FEBRUARY...XX HORRIBLE ACTS WHICH THE ELEMENTS HAD THE AUDACITY TO FILM...XX YOU ARE HEREBY REQUESTED TO IMMEDIATELY LAUNCH DISCIPLINARY AND LEGAL MEASURES AGAINST THE PERPETRATORS... [Capital letters in original].¹⁰⁴

On 15 February 2021, Adamu Shuaibu Ibrahim's measures to apprehend the suspects and bring them to book were given added weight when, on the instructions of the Minister Delegate in-charge of Defence at the Presidency, two gendarme officers, two military officers and four police officers were immediately arrested.¹⁰⁵

The military did not relent in its policy to "wipe out" secessionist fighters. The government felt that a military solution was the best option. In February 2021, "General Joel," a hardened separatist who led Amba fighters and terrorised the inhabitants of Bambili in the North West Region, was killed. "General Joel" was "highly wanted" by the military and he gave "Bambili residents a hard time and everyone dreaded him."¹⁰⁶ Later in the month of March 2021, the military attacked one of the camps of the notorious Bui Warriors and in the course of the operation, 12 Amba fighters were killed while two military officers were killed by Amba fighters.

One of the training camps of the Bui Warriors and a local factory which produced artisanal weapons were destroyed. In March 2021, the military arrested the dreaded "General Nokia", Rigobert Mbiankeu, who was the brain behind the abduction of some Municipal Councillors and staff of Konye Council in Meme Division.¹⁰⁷ In May 2021, Prime Minister Ngute led the destruction of a consignment of illicit weapons in Buea in

¹⁰⁴ Adamu Shuaibu Ibrahim, Divisional Officer, Ndu Sub-Division, Donga-Mantung Division, *Radio-Fax-Message*, REF No. E27/05/, 14 February 2021; see also *The Guardian Post*, No. 207, Monday, 15 February 2021, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Communiqué de Presse*, No. 00157/CP/MINDEF/019, 15 February 2021, Yaounde.

¹⁰⁶ *The Sun*, No. 0638, Wednesday, 24 February 2021, 9.

¹⁰⁷ *The Guardian Post*, No. 2091, Wednesday, 10 March 2021, 1.

a symbolic gesture to demonstrate the readiness of the government to end the conflict. But the separatists saw it differently and five days later, the military dislodged “General Akwaba” and his gang in Kumbo/Mbuluf Bui country killing at least four separatists including “General Akwaba.”

These successes endeared the military to the population that had become too disillusioned with the stance of the separatists. On 18 March 2021, for instance, Akuro Capdel, “General Spirito”, and seven Amba fighters were killed in Foe Bakundu, a locality in Mbonge Sub-Division in Meme Division after a military operation. “General Spirito” and his fighters had terrorised the population of several localities in Meme Division since the beginning of the armed conflict. The influence of “General Spirito” also extended to the area covering the locality of Mautu in Muyuka Sub-Division. When the corpse of “General Spirito” was taken to Kumba, the population flooded the streets “in jubilation” and viewed the corpse gleefully in front of the BICEC Junction in Kumba.¹⁰⁸ In May-June 2021, the military launched “Operation Clean Kumbo” in the North West Region with Colonel Matiang at the head of a 300-man strong troop. Colonel Matiang and his men killed three notorious Amba “Generals” namely Thunder, Abakwa and Spider and many other Amba fighters; four military officers were also killed in the course of “Operation Clean Kumbo.” But “General No Pity,” one of the most notorious and feared “Generals” in the North Wes Region, escaped.¹⁰⁹

The separatist fighters abducted both Anglophone civilians and military and police officers; and, most often, assassinated them. The national defence and security forces, in their attempt to contain the Amba fighters, often unleashed their fury on the population resulting in unpleasant consequences. Amba fighters also mounted control checkpoints and used the crisis to collect money from helpless Anglophones. Both sides had unscrupulous elements that used the Anglophone Crisis as a “money-making” business. For instance, on 7 September 2020, a certain Ebenezer Njoh Tengoh was arrested in Tiko, Fako Division, in the course of concluding the purchase of ammunitions worth about 700,000 CFA Frs. from Police Officer Richard Moka Mokosso. But at the end of the day, those who paid the highest price were Anglophones whom the secessionists in the diaspora and their fighters on the ground claimed to be fighting for and who the national defence and security forces were sent to protect.

As *The Guardian Post* reported: “several high profile and revered Anglophone personalities are among those who have been kidnapped and subjected to physical and

108 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2098, Friday, 19 March 2021, 1.

109 In the course of “Operation Clean Kumbo”, ten motorbikes, five AK47 rifles, several dane guns, charms (*odeshi*) and materials used in the fabrication of IEDs were retrieved.

mental torture” and even death by Amba fighters.¹¹⁰ The population, in several localities in the North West and South West Regions, was also tortured and forced to become IDPs by Amba fighters who claimed to have fought on behalf of Anglophones and also by the national defence and security forces that were expected to protect Anglophones. As the Anglophone Crisis entered the second half of 2022, the grim reality was that “Operation Bamenda Clean” in the North West Region was not as successful as the military authorities had envisaged. Armed separatists attacked the forces of law and order with impunity and the abduction of civilians for ransom continued unabated.

The separatist fighters adopted asymmetric war strategies and employed Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) with, at times, fatal consequences on security forces. The casualties which resulted from the use of IEDs by separatist fighters included both military and civilians. In early May 2021, for instance, a public passenger transport bus was hit by IEDs near Sabga village in Ngoketunjia Division; three passengers were killed and four others were severely wounded. The separatists also carried their “struggle” into the neighbouring West Region. On 29 April 2021, for example, Amba fighters from Ngoketunjia Division attacked a military post in Mefoung, Galim, in the Bamboutous Division, West Region. The attack left at least four soldiers dead.¹¹¹ On 4 December 2021, three soldiers were killed and several others wounded when separatist fighters attacked a military outpost inside the Jakiri market in Bui Division. Later in December 2021, five persons were burnt to death when several houses were set ablaze along the Mbengwi Road, Azire and Bamenda Hospital Roundabout (North West Region) during a military reprisal against Amba fighters in response to the killing of some soldiers.¹¹²

Black September Month 2021 for the Military

A brief and non exhaustive narration pointed to the assertion that September 2021 was the deadliest and darkest month for the military during the conflict between 2016 and 2021. On 11 September, Bui Warriors ambushed a military convoy at Kikaikilaki between Kumbo and Ndu and seven soldiers were killed. On the same day at Misaje in Donga-Mantung Division, two soldiers were killed while in Bamenda, a police officer was also killed. On 16 September, 15 soldiers were killed in Bamessing in Ndop sub-Division when a military convoy was attacked with anti-tank rocket launcher (ATRL). Following these two deadly attacks, the Minister-Delegate at the Presidency in-charge of Defence, Joseph Beti Assomo, announced “a change in the military strategy against

¹¹⁰ *The Guardian Post*, No. 2008, Monday, 09 November 2020, 1.

¹¹¹ *The Guardian Post*, No. 2135, Monday, 03 May 2021, 1.

¹¹² *The Guardian Post*, No. 2317, Friday, 10 December 2021, 1.

Ambazonia fighters.”¹¹³ In fact, a *Press Release* from the Ministry of Defence stated: “It is thus clear that the coming into play of high-capacity explosives and new weapons undoubtedly enshrines a paradigm change in ongoing operations.”¹¹⁴

In spite of the strong language from Minister Assomo, on 23 September, Amba separatist fighters led by “Commander Pay Cash” attacked a military vehicle with the aid of IEDs in Small Ekombe leaving three soldiers dead; “Commander Pay Cash” was later killed by the military the next day. Similarly, on 25 September, the Bui Warriors attacked a military vehicle in Kumbo with the aid of IEDs killing one soldier. On 26 September, another soldier was killed in Ndu near the Baptist Church in Njinko after clashes with the separatists. In Bafut on the same day, 7 Kata armed group allied with other armed groups and attacked the Gendarmerie Station at Agyati in Bafut killing a soldier. On 30 September, three soldiers were killed in Bamali in Ndop Sub-Division. On Friday, 12 November 2021, a military convoy was attacked at Matazem: eight members of the national defence and security forces were killed (five police officers and three gendarmes) and a civilian.

The response from the military usually caught some innocent civilians in the process. For instance, on Thursday, 14 October 2021, gendarme officer Achille Mvogo brutally murdered a pupil, Enondiale Tchungwia Caroluise, of the Catholic University Institute of Buea Academy of Talents (CUIB/A&T) during a control check while she was in a car en route to school in the morning. All hell broke loose in Buea as the population lynched Achille Mvogo to death and took to the streets in condemnation of the killing of Enondiale. But for the cool-headedness of Governor Okalia Bilai of the South West Region, Bishop Michael Bibi of the Diocese of Buea and the family of Enondiale, blood would have flowed through the streets of Buea, literally speaking.

In Bamenda, on Friday, 12 November 2021, a primary school pupil named Tataw Brandy was hit and killed by a police bullet in the course of chasing a vehicle driven by Goodluck Ngum, Director-General of Microfinance Credit Union- Bamenda, who had refused to stop at a police control post.¹¹⁵ The Bamenda population went mad and marched with the corpse to the Governor’s Office while burning some vehicles on their route. Despite these disturbing and regrettable killings by some members of the national defence and security forces, the military intensified its hunt for secessionist fighters who refused to drop down their weapons. On 24 October 2021, one of the most dreaded Amba fighters in Ndop, “General Trouble,” was killed by the military at the Bamunka-Ndop Central Market Square. “General Trouble” was gunned down “as he

¹¹³ *The Guardian Post*, No. 2250, Thursday, 23 September, 2021, 1.

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Defence, *Press Release*, No. 00715/CP/ MINDEF/019, 20 September 2021, Yaounde.

¹¹⁵ Delegation of National Security, “*Communiqué de Presse*, No. 80, Yaounde, 12 novembre 2021.

arrived the market square to extort [money] from business persons.”¹¹⁶ In the course of the gun battle, one of his aides was killed alongside a civilian lady.

On 29 October 2021, Amba “General Cross and Die” who had challenged the military in Bali in 2020; terrorized the population of Bali in particular and Mezam in general; and, vehemently rejected talks of federation, was killed. “General Cross and Die” stood for nothing less than the separation and independence of the North West and South West Regions. His death was celebrated by the population. In October 2021, the military killed about eight persons in the Wanangwen neighbourhood in Wum and set ablaze several houses following the killing of a soldier by armed separatists.¹¹⁷ On Wednesday, 1st June 2022, soldiers of the 53rd Motorised Infantry Battalion “on a mission to search for a missing comrade” killed nine civilians in Fungom subdivision, Menchum Division.¹¹⁸ The four soldiers who committed the odious act were demobilized by the Bamenda Gendarmerie Company for appropriate legal procedures.

Assassination of “Field Marshal” Oliver Lekeaka, 12 July 2022

On 9 July 2022, the driving force of the Red Dragons, “Field Marshal” Oliver Lekeaka released a video in which he mocked and challenged the national defence and security forces. On 12 July 2022, the national defence and security forces scored one of its most-sought ‘victories’ following the assassination of the dreaded “Field Marshal” in his hide-out deep in the heart of the Lebialem forest. His corpse was flown to Kumba where it was displayed at the BICEC Junction as if it was a coveted trophy.¹¹⁹ The death of Oliver Lekeaka, despite his notoriety and the atrocities he committed, did not raise much discussion or apprehension within the Amba fighters, his supporters behind the mask nor among the Ambazonian community in the diaspora. His supporters within and outside Cameroon behaved like a hunting dog which failed in its mission and returned home with its tail between its legs.

Most Cameroonians, especially the sons and daughters of Lebialem, heaved a sigh of relief following the assassination of Oliver Lekeaka. The population of Lebialem that had borne much of the humiliation and heinous atrocities of Lekeaka and his Red Dragons expressed their “boundless joy, following the announcement of the death of the greatest oppressor ever of our peace loving people.”¹²⁰ Most of the Lebialem population

116 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2277, Monday, 25 October 2021, 1.

117 *Ibid.* No. 2273, Wednesday, 20 October 2021, 1.

118 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2471, Wednesday, 8 June 2022, 3.

119 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2514, Thursday, 21 July 2022, 1.

120 Oliver Lekunze, Collins Chomoh and Gorden Forchin, “Lebialem Rejoices”, July 2022.

disowned “Field Marshal” Lekeaka who had, “for five years unleashed a particular reign of terror” on the population.¹²¹ This was aptly summarized by the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) for Meme Division, Ntou’ou Ndong, in the following words: “ ‘Field Marshal,’ you know it very well, killed more than 400 persons in Lebialem, including Meme division.... I can say openly that ‘Field Marshal,’ who used to call himself King of the forest, has been killed.”¹²² In addition to the human deaths and the gross disrespect and destruction of human dignity experienced by Anglophones in the two regions, the social and economic fabric also took a severe beating from the crisis.

Socio-economic Effects of the Crisis in the North West and South West Regions

The armed conflict dislocated the political and social activities of the population of the North West and South West Regions. It was, however, on the economic stage that the population of the two regions in particular and Cameroonians in general gravely felt the impact of the crisis. The inability by road construction companies to execute their road projects in the two regions; the destruction of small and big businesses; the near collapse of some of the agro-industrial businesses (for instance, CDC and Pamol); the thousands of deaths in the secessionist camps; the abductions of Anglophones for ransoms; and, the clamp down on the population in some rural areas and villages by the defense and security forces gravely affected the economic activities in the two regions.

The road transportation system was devastated in rural areas as bridges were destroyed in some cases while in others, huge trees were felled to block the roads in order to frustrate and hamper military operations. In addition, some road construction projects were either stopped or abandoned. For example, the SOROBACET Construction Company abandoned the Kumba-Ekondo-Titi-Isangele Road; the Kumba-Mamfe Road especially between Bakebe and Mbinjong; and, the Mbouda-Babadjou-Bamenda Roads were abandoned. The Mbanga-Kumba Railway transport system collapsed due to insecurity and vandalization of railway infrastructure. The supply of electricity was very uncertain in towns such as Buea, Kumba, Tombel, Bangem, Bamenda and Mamfe with numerous power cuts which lasted for several days in certain localities. The rural areas and villages were the worst affected areas.

In order to better appreciate the disastrous economic consequences of the crisis in the North West and South West Regions, the *Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun* (GICAM) commissioned a study on the economic effects of the Anglophone crisis in the two regions. The GICAM released its report on 13 September 2018. The crisis,

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *The Guardian Post*, No. 2514, Thursday, 21 July 2022, 8.

according to the GICAM Report, cost about 2.153 billion francs CFA as a result of the property, machines/equipment and immovable goods which were either destroyed or vandalized.¹²³ The economy of the North West and the South West Regions lost about 269 billion francs CFA in the following sectors: agro-food industries, local agro-industries, telecommunications, cocoa, coffee, banana, tea, palm oil, and rubber. The South West Region lost its leadership position in cocoa production to the Centre Region. Before the crisis, the South West Region produced 45% of Cameroon's cocoa production; by the end of 2018, it had dropped to 32%. The North West Region, before the crisis, accounted for 70% of Cameroon's Arabica coffee production but the region was hard hit by the crisis and its production declined substantially.¹²⁴ The two biggest agro-industrial enterprises in the South West Region, the CDC and PAMOL, bore the brunt.

The CDC and PAMOL specialized in the production of banana, palm oil and rubber. The destruction of several banana, palm oil and rubber plantations or the harvested produce as well as the theft of tons of produce which was facilitated by the insecurity led to the loss of about 9.2 billion francs CFA. The CDC lost about one billion francs CFA because its property and economic structures were either destroyed or vandalized as well as 12 billion francs CFA. In terms of jobs, the CDC lost 6,124 jobs and 5,805 other jobs were threatened. The lost incurred by the CDC, PAMOL and other enterprises/businesses was caused by the "*ville mortes*" ("Ghost Town") operations; internet interruptions from January to March 2017; targeted attacks on economic infrastructures and installations; threats; abductions; in some cases, assassination of workers; pillage of plantations; and, theft of palm nuts and palm oil in storage reservoirs.¹²⁵

The situation of the CDC was very alarming. According to the General Manager of the CDC, by December 2018, out of the seven (7) palm estates in the oil-palm sector, only two were operational and, in fact, only partially. In the rubber sector, out of eleven (11) rubber estates, only four (4) were operational, and, once more, only partially. The CDC, with an initial work-force of 20,000 workers, by December 2018, almost 12,500 workers were jobless.¹²⁶ Therefore, only 7,500 workers were effectively working and this number included clerical workers. The situation was not sustainable as the workers were consistently attacked, some of them were abducted, some assassinated and others

123 This amount did not include the destruction of SATOM's road construction equipment on the Babadjou-Akum road on 23 August 2018.

124 *Le jour*, No. 2769 du lundi 17 septembre 2018, 6 ; *Mutations Quotidien*, No. 4698, lundi 17 septembre 2018, 11.

125 Ibid.

126 <https://you.be/Pb1-28pmrq> (accessed 30 November 2018).

had either their hands or fingers cut-off by secessionist fighters in order to prevent other CDC workers from going to work; almost all of those abducted, killed or who had their hands and/or fingers cut-off were Anglophones.

The brewery industries which operated in the two regions, especially *Les Brasseries du Cameroun* and *Source du Pays* were heavily affected as their trucks transporting drinks and their warehouses were attacked and vandalized; in some cases, their workers were assassinated. *Source du Pays*, for instance, which through its corporate responsibility and hospitality, provided enormous assistance to the poor and impoverished especially in the South West Region bore the brunt of the crisis. The brewery industries that operated in the North West and South West Regions lost about 40 billion francs CFA while theft and vandalism cost the brewery companies an estimated 500 million francs CFA in material loss. In the telecommunications sector, about 300 million francs CFA worth of equipment were destroyed and more than one billion francs CFA was lost monthly.

In September 2019, GICAM reported that more than 1,000 billion Frs. CFA was lost between 2017 and 2019 because of the Anglophone crisis. The government also lost 80 billion Frs. Cfa in revenue as taxes. By September 2019, according to GICAM, enterprises in nine sectors had lost 40 billion Frs. CFA.¹²⁷ Of course, these amounts did not include the devastating economic effects due to the forced unemployment. In order to contain the scarcity of some basic products, between 2017 and 2021, the government eased and promoted the importation of an estimated yearly amount of 100,000 tons of palm oil in order to off-set the impact of the drastic reduction in locally produced palm oil. Similarly, the government turned a blind eye to the sale of illegally imported fuel, locally called *zoua-zoua*, which flooded most roadsides in the North West and South West Regions as well as some other regions in Cameroon. Any attempt to prevent its illegal importation and sale would have exposed the inability of the government-owned refinery, the *Société Nationale de Raffinage* (SONARA), to satisfy the local consumption of fuel. In addition to the socio-economic consequences of the crisis discussed above, the human toll was enormous.

The IDPs were forced to take up petty businesses and became self-employed in their new locations. They became “engaged in trading and farming”¹²⁸ while some girls took up prostitution as a means of survival. The high level of insecurity and mass

127 GICAM Report 2019

128 Anne-Paule Nlem Ngoh, “The Effects of the Anglophone Crisis on the Socio-economic Development of the North-West and South-West Regions in Cameroon: A Human Security Approach” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences, Pan African University, Yaounde, 2020), 126.

displacements of the population drastically reduced the “active plantation workers” as was experienced in the South West Region.¹²⁹ According to Nlem Ngoh, primary sector activities such as agriculture, fishing and forestry were seriously affected by lockdowns. Several industries, secondary sector, either worked below capacity or simply collapsed because of either shortage of primary materials or lack of constant and assured supply of primary materials. The tertiary sector of transport and hospitality services was also affected by the numerous lockdowns, the abduction of transporters and the burning of transport vehicles.¹³⁰ The reduction of clients in hotels led to the redundancy of some of the hotel workers. The population of the two Anglophone regions also experienced grave social hardships in addition to the economic hardships.

The population experienced social hardship which was occasioned by the destruction of hospitals such as the Kumba General Hospital and the Mamfe Hospital and the numerous health facilities in the North West and South West Regions which were either abandoned or destroyed. Some educational facilities in most rural areas and villages were either set ablaze, abandoned or were not operational due to lack of students and teachers who escaped because of insecurity. The drastic fall in school enrollment and attendance because of insecurity affected the performances of pupils and students in public examinations in the two regions.

For instance, in the 2018 General Certificate of Examination (GCE) Ordinary Level Results, no division in the North West and South West Regions scored at least 50% pass. The results were as follows: Lebialem Division (18.05% pass), Kupe-Manenguba Division (29.15% pass), Ndian Division (36.5% pass), Fako Division (40.13% pass), Manyu Division (40.56 % pass), and Meme Division (47.74% pass) in the South West. In the North West the results were as follows: Momo Division (40.07% pass), Boyo Division (40.59 % pass), Menchum Division (43.94% pass), Mezam Division (44.27 % pass), Donga-Mantung Division (45.91% pass), Ngo-Ketunjia Division (49.09% pass), and Bui Division (49.315 pass).¹³¹ However, the results of subsequent years improved as pupils, students, teachers and parents braved the threats and ignored the call for school boycott in most of the towns and cities in the two regions.

Conclusion

The trade union grievances of Anglophone teachers and the Common Law lawyers were the tip of a deeper and more fundamental politico-constitutional problem which affected the form and territorial integrity of the state. This was especially so given the

¹²⁹ Ibid., 126.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 129.

¹³¹ GCE Board 2018/Ministry of Secondary Education, Yaounde.

change of name from the “United Republic of Cameroon” in February 1984 to simply “The Republic of Cameroon.” Although some teachers and Common Law lawyers genuinely wanted an improvement of their profession and working conditions, others had a concealed agenda of secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions. Yet, others simply wanted a return to federalism.

The crisis degenerated into an armed conflict and moderate Anglophones who preached a federal system were pushed aside. The extremists, funded by Cameroonians in the diaspora and assisted by some internal forces, launched a relentless wave of assassinations and abductions of Anglophones. The month of July 2022 was special in the hunting down of separatist warlords as “Field Marshal” Oliver Lekeaka was assassinated. The conflict also led to the immense destruction of economic and social facilities/activities in the North West and South West Regions.

In response, in the course of combating the secessionist forces, the military committed gross human rights violations ranging from extra-judicial executions to burning of homes and villages. In the midst of the economic and socio- political crisis, President Biya adopted a carrot-and-baton approach. The international community and friends of Cameroon called for an all-inclusive dialogue to redress the problems that triggered the outbreak of the crisis in November 2016. The government took measures which were aimed at addressing the corporate grievances of the teachers, Common Law lawyers as well as some other aspects of the Anglophone Problem as discussed in chapter seven.

GRIEVANCES AND QUEST FOR SOLUTIONS

Introduction

The social, economic, humanitarian and political havoc created by the Anglophone Crisis did not leave Cameroonians and the international community indifferent. The churches, the government, the international community and some well-intentioned Cameroonians searched for an all-inclusive meaningful dialogue which would guarantee the return to normalcy, unity and maintain the territorial integrity of the country. The government addressed some of the grievances of the Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers. It also attempted to address the humanitarian crisis unleashed by the armed conflict. But the root cause of the crisis, the Anglophone Problem, could only be solved by politico-constitutional measures. The secessionist frontline leaders in the diaspora who manipulated the fighters in the North West and South West Regions wanted nothing short of the secession and independence of the two Anglophone regions. This was, in spite of the fact that the position of the secessionist frontline leaders did not reflect the views of the majority of Anglophones, especially Anglophones of the South West Region.

The demand for a return to federalism which garnered the most support, although the number of federal units/states was to be decided, from Anglophones and a respectable proportion of Francophones was rejected by the government. Some Francophones, especially within the governing class, held that federalism was a step towards secession. In other words, it was secession clothed in federalism. As unfruitful secret talks were held in Switzerland by representatives of the Cameroon government and secessionist leaders in the diaspora, President Biya announced, in September 2019, the holding of the much-demanded all-inclusive national dialogue, the Major National Dialogue (MND).

Grievances of Teachers' Trade Unions

The Teachers' Trade Unions which tabled the grievances of the English Sub-system of Education were: the Cameroon Anglophone Teachers Trade Union (CATTU), the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC), the Presbyterian Education Authority Teachers Trade Union (PEATTU), the Catholic Education Teachers Trade Union (CETTU), the Baptist Teachers Trade Union (BATTUC) and SYNES/UB. The grievances

which they presented increased from eleven points to twenty points as negotiations progressed.¹

In a summary manner, the grievances were:

- i. The Education system in the English sub-system should not be adulterated;
- ii. Payments of arrears of 2015/2016 academic year for the University of Buea;
- iii. Improvement of working conditions;
- iv. Admission procedures of students in to the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda should be according to Anglo-Saxon tradition;
- v. Recruitment of teachers and support staff;
- vi. Francophone teachers with little or no mastery of English language in Anglophone schools in the North West and South West Regions should be re-deployed to the French-speaking Regions;
- vii. Creation of a Higher Teachers' Training College exclusively reserved for English-Speaking regions;
- viii. Restoration of internet services;
- ix. For University of Buea students:
 - a) Payment of Presidential Excellence Award;
 - b) Cancellation of the 10,000 francs CFA penalty fee for late registration; and,
 - c) Lifting of the ban on University of Buea Students' Union (UBSU).
- x. The teachers also demanded sweeping reforms in commercial and technical education notably:
 - b) Termination of *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle* (CAP) examinations in Anglophone schools;
 - c) Introduction of Intermediate Technical and Vocational Education Examination (ITVEE); and,
 - d) Award of Intermediate Technical Certificates (ITC) with results in specialties and subjects.

1 For the grievances of both the Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers, see *Cameroon Tribune*, No. 11447/7646, October 09 2017; *Eden*, No. 1001, Monday, 16 January 2017, 5; and, *The Post*, No. 01849, Monday, 04 September 2017 2-6.

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province made it known that the Catholic Church did not recognise the Catholic Education Teachers Trade Union (CETTU) because the term *Catholic* could not be used willy-nilly without the expressed permission from the appropriate authority of the Catholic Church.

Common Law Lawyers' Grievances

- i. The lawyers decried the manner in which "justice is rendered" in the North West and South West Regions which was not in conformity with the Common Law;
- ii. The absence of an English version of the OHADA Uniform Acts, the main documents used in commercial proceedings before the Cameroonian Courts;
- iii. Lack of independence of the Cameroon Bar Association free of government supervision and control;
- iv. Creation of two divisions of the Common Law and Civil Law clearly defined and should operate side-by-side in ENAM;
- v. Protection of Anglophone minority according to the constitution because of the bi-jurial, bilingual and bi-cultural nature of Cameroon;
- vi. No Common Law Section in the Supreme Court to examine appeals from the North West and South West jurisdictions;
- vii. Use of Civil Code in the jurisdictions of the English-speaking regions instead of the Common Law;
- viii. Creation of Law Schools;
- ix. Francophone magistrates in the North West and South West Regions who did not master the Common Law and some could barely express themselves in English;
- x. Absence of English Law in the Cameroonian judicial system; and,
- xi. No notaries should be appointed in the North West and South West Regions.

The Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers under the banner of the Consortium did not conceal their position that only a return to the two-state federal system would resolve their grievances. The return to a federal system was contained in the resolutions of the Common Law lawyers of 9 May 2015. But there was no demand, by any stretch of the imagination, for the secession and independence of the two regions. The situation was rendered complex and complicated because of the deep mistrust between the Ghogomo Committee and the Teachers. In all of the fruitless meetings, the involvement of an honest broker, therefore, became inevitable.

Government and Resolution of Teachers' Grievances

The Inter-ministerial Ad-hoc Committee and the Anglophone Teachers' Trade Unions finally accepted a-19-point recommendations/proposals. It was believed that the recommendations would solve the grievances of the teachers. The resolutions were, amongst others:

- i. Redeployment of Francophone teachers without a good mastery of English to schools in the Francophone zone;
- ii. Creation of a Department of French in the Higher Teachers' Training College (ENS) Bambili;
- iii. Creation of another Higher Technical Teachers' Training College (ENSET) for Francophones;
- iv. Creation of a Polytechnique for the English sub-system of Education;
- v. Special recruitment of 500 lecturers for the Universities of Buea and Bamenda;
- vi. Number of specialties in English-speaking technical schools was increased;
- vii. Subvention of 2 billion francs CFA to assist confessional and lay private schools;
- viii. Admission into Anglo-Saxon medical schools should respect the Anglo-Saxon traditions under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and the respective medical councils;
- ix. Internet services were restored in the North West and South West Regions
- x. Some arrested Anglophone leaders were released;
- xi. Discontinuance of the case against the Bishops, the PCC Moderator and the Executive Secretary of the CBC;
- xii. Admission of students into the Universities of Buea and Bamenda simplified subject to the conditions set by applicable regulations;
- xiii. Recruitment of 1,000 young bilingual Cameroonian teachers, graduates of higher education;
- xiv. Abolition of 10,000 francs CFA penalty fee for late payment of registration fees (University of Buea); and,
- xv. Payment of Presidential Excellence Award Grants (University of Buea).²

2 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1104, Tuesday, 07 February 2017, 6-7; *Cameroon Tribune*, 09 October 2017, 9.

Government and Resolution of Lawyers' Grievances

The grievances of the lawyers were addressed and agreed upon by the Laurent Esso-Lawyers' Committee as follows:

- i. Provision of the official English version of the OHADA Uniform Acts and the Cameroonian Penal Code;
- ii. Creation of an English-speaking section at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM);
- iii. Establishment of a Common Law Bench at the Supreme Court of Cameroon;
- iv. Creation of a Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Buea;
- v. Creation of a Department of English Law at the Universities of Dschang, Maroua and Ngaoundere; creation of Departments of Public Law at the Universities of Buea and Bamenda;
- vi. Recruitment and placement of appropriate judicial personnel in the North West and South West Courts of Appeal;
- vii. Appointment of an English-speaking Magistrate to the post of President of the Judicial Bench at the Supreme Court; Appointment of an English-speaking Magistrate as State Prosecutor at the Bamenda Court of First Instance and the High Court; and,
- viii. Integration, promotion and re-deployment of magistrates throughout the national territory taking into account their mastery of the official languages.

Humanitarian Assistance

It was expected that with the resolution of the grievances as presented by the Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers' associations, the crisis was going to be resolved. This expectation failed to recognize that the grievances posed by the Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers' associations were the tip of the accumulated grievances which they felt could only be resolved by a return to a federal system or, according to the extremists, by the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions. The procrastination by the government in implementing the effective decentralization and the creation of Regional Councils as stipulated in the 1996 Constitution hardened the position of the extremists in-and-out of the Teachers' Trade Unions and the Common Law lawyers' associations. Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis ravaged the population in the North West and South West Regions and drew the attention of the Churches, the Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Humanitarian Assistance: The Churches

The churches, especially the Catholic Church and the PCC, did not content themselves only by issuing memoranda and praying for peace in Cameroon and for Cameroonians. They also undertook humanitarian actions to assist the IDPs and Cameroonians who fled to Nigeria as refugees as well as those whose villages were razed down and were forced to escape to other parts of Cameroon. The most affected division in the North West and South West was initially Manyu Division given its proximity to the Cross River State and the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. The Bishop of the Mamfe Diocese, His Lordship Bishop Andrew Nkea, after several villages were burnt in Akwaya and Eyumojock sub-divisions, among other places, paid a pastoral/ humanitarian visit to the affected villages and people. From 31st December 2017 to 1st January 2018, Bishop Nkea visited some of the IDPs, gave them humanitarian assistance and provided shelter for those in his parishes.

In June 2018, a delegation of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) led by its President Archbishop Samuel Kleda, its President for Justice and Peace Commission Bishop Abraham Kome of Bafang, Bishop Andrew Nkea of the Mamfe Diocese, and the Director of CARITAS, Rev. Fr Kizito Bak, visited Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria in three localities: the settlements at Bashua and Biajouta in Boki Local Government Area with 18,950 refugees; Agborkem-waterfall in Etung Local Government Area with 4,330 refugees; and, in Ikom Local Government Area with 3,600 refugees. The refugees were told that the “visitors” came “as pastor of soul” and that “when one part of the body is suffering, it is the whole body that is suffering.”³ The delegation also visited the IDPs in Ossing and Kembong in Manyu Division where food items and financial assistance were given out. Some IDPs in the Diocese of Mamfe also received assistance from the Archdiocese of Douala and some Apostolic Groups and parishes in Francophone Cameroon. Other Christian denominations such as the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Cameroon Baptist Convention CBC) extended similar humanitarian gestures to the IDPs in several localities

Humanitarian Assistance: The Government

The Anglophone Crisis forced thousands of Anglophones in the North West and South West Regions to abandon their homes and villages. Some of those who were in the localities that bordered the Cross River State and the Niger Delta area of Nigeria escaped to Nigeria. The number of IDPs increased from an estimated 150,000 to about 750,000 by the end of 2021. The increase in atrocities by the secessionists and the response by the military which usually led to the burning of homes and villages aggravated the

3 *Cameroon Panorama*, No. 720 June 2018, 9-10.

pains and sufferings of thousands of civilians, most of whom were innocent while, of course, some were accomplices. The situation was compounded by the fact that some of the “innocent civilians” cooperated and sympathized with the secessionists because they supported the secessionist cause; others cooperated out of the necessity to survive.

At the end of the day, the secessionists, in most cases, inflicted more pains and sufferings on Anglophones than in convincing them to accept their views. The secessionist armed groups aggravated the pains of those they claimed they were fighting for in the following ways: highways were blocked by felling huge trees; truck loads of sand were dumped on roads to make them impassable; some markets, schools and colleges were burnt down; “ghost town” operations shut down businesses; lawlessness reigned supreme in several localities in the North West and South West Regions; bandits controlled and mounted road blocks checking “Identity Cards” and collecting money; civilians were abducted and ransom demanded; some civilians and members of the defence and security forces were killed and some had their corpses decapitated; and, the settling of scores and threats became the order of the day in some localities.

In June 2018, the government made known its “Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan 2018-2019” which was estimated at 12.7 billion francs CFA for the victims of the Anglophone Crisis in the North West and South West Regions. Cameroonians were called upon to generously participate in the humanitarian endeavour. The concept of assisting distressed Cameroonians was engraved in the Cameroonian sense of hospitality. It was not unique to the Anglophone Crisis in the North West and South West Regions. The government did a similar venture for the victims of Boko Haram in the Grand North of Cameroon. In presenting the Government’s “Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan” for the North West and South West Regions, Prime Minister Philemon Yang identified seven priority areas:

- i. Protection of displaced persons;
- ii. Food and basic needs;
- iii. Healthcare;
- iv. Education;
- v. Resumption of economic and agricultural activities;
- vi. Housing; and,
- vii. Reconstruction of individual administrative documents.⁴

⁴ *The Post Weekender*, No. 01923, Friday, 22 June 2018, 7-8; “Emergency Humanitarian Assistance.”

The government, in its report contained in the “Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan,” accused the secessionists of the following:

- i. Violation of the right to education;
- ii. Disruption of economic activities;
- iii. Attacks on members of the defence and security forces;
- iv. Conscription of children into militia;
- v. Attacks against Administrative and Traditional Authorities;
- vi. Incitement to violence through the social media; and,
- vii. Abuses against the population and women and girls became victims of sexual abuses and unwanted pregnancies.⁵

Humanitarian Assistance: NGOs

The Anglophone Crisis attracted several international and national Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) delivered humanitarian assistance, without discrimination, to the affected population in the North West and South West Regions. These INGOs included: Action Against Hunger, Care, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Plan International and *Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders* popularly known by its French acronym MSF.

The NGOs based their humanitarian mission on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. The UN Secretary-General in May 2020 launched a ceasefire in conflict-hit and war-torn countries in order to enable health workers in their fight to contain and eradicate the COVID-19 Pandemic. The UN Security Council subsequently supported the appeal by the UN Secretary-General for a global ceasefire. In mid 2021, there were about three million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the North West and South west Regions with about 750,000 IDPs. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) was very visible in the treatment of wounded Amba fighters and civilians. MSF, for instance, had a ward (section) at the Buea Regional Hospital for the execution of its humanitarian assistance. The collaboration between the Cameroon government and some humanitarian NGOs, however, was far from cordial. The government accused some of the NGOs, especially the MSF, of aiding and abetting secessionist groups. In 2020, the MSF was declared *persona non grata* in the North West Region.

5 Ibid.

In December 2021, MSF was in the news again as the government accused it of being in league with some Amba fighters in the South West Region. On 25 December 2021, a military patrol was engaged in a gun battle with Amba fighters at Tinto II in Manyu Division led by Princely Tabe Mbu who was also known as “General Moving Star”; and, Eugene Besong also known as “General Pa Lampat.” During the gun battle, Mbu and Besong were gravely wounded but their comrades succeeded in taking them to their camp in the Ntenmbang forest. According to the Cameroon military, Amba fighters in the locality contacted the MSF at its Mamfe Station on 26 December 2021 to have the two “Generals” transferred to MSF facilities for appropriate medical treatment.

Without informing the appropriate Cameroonian authorities, MSF dispatched its ambulance to Ashum in Mamfe to pick up Mbu and Besong. On arriving Ashum, it was discovered that Besong, “General Pa Lampat,” had died from his bullet wounds.⁶ Doctors Without Borders (MSF) decided to evacuate Mbu, whom MSF registered in their medical record as Ben Ndip, to Mutengene in Fako Division for urgent surgical operation. But, at the Nguti military checkpoint, the MSF ambulance which transported “General Moving Star”, Mbu, was stopped by the 6th Mobile Intervention Battalion. “General Moving Star” was taken back to Mamfe for treatment.⁷

The incident, according to the Cameroon government, gave credence to its allegation that the MSF collaborated with armed secessionist groups in the Anglophone crisis. As reported by the government, it “established that DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS maintain close relations with terrorists in the South West Region... and facilitate their bloodthirsty actions on the ground” [Capitals in original]. From the point of view of the government, therefore, it was “a clandestine operation to exfiltrate and cover terrorists, despite repeated warnings from Cameroonian authorities.”⁸ Doctors Without Borders, in its communiqué, did not challenge the position of the government but explained that “to avoid further incidents with our ambulances, we have been in touch with the [Cameroon] authorities to understand the reason for the miscommunication....”⁹

The most effective and durable humanitarian assistance was, however, putting an end to the crisis and its resulting conflict. But, the search for peace was difficult and fraught with suspicion, intoxication, manipulation and denials to accept the root cause of the crisis. In addition, the initial hidden agenda, secession, which eventually came to light

6 *Press Release*, Ref. 00971/CP/MINDEF/019, 27 December 2021, Yaounde.

7 *Ibid.*; “Doctors Without Borders Statement on Nguti (SW Cameroon) Incident”, 27th December 2021.

8 *Press Release*, Ref. 00971/CP/MINDEF/019, 27 December 2021.

9 “Doctors Without Borders Statement.”

accounted for the collapse of several meetings between the government and the armed secessionists. Furthermore, the Anglophone crisis became a money-making venture for Amba fighters and some unscrupulous military and administrative officials.

Calls for the Peaceful Resolution of the Crisis

The Government and the Consortium of Lawyers and Teachers' Trade Unions accused each other for the collapse of honest dialogue. The situation deteriorated when the Consortium was banned and the lawyers and teachers insisted on the re-institution of the pre-1972 two-state federal structure; this was not, however, one of their initial grievances. The extremists declared the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions and set up an Interim Government (IG) in the diaspora.

The demand for a return to either a two-state federal system or the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions as a separate state was not unanimously accepted in the two regions. The call for the independence of the two regions was against the constitution of the country and President Biya had, like in all previous occasions, sworn to uphold the unity and territorial integrity of the country when he took the oath of office in October 2018. The South Westerners, as opposed to the population of South West, through the South West Chiefs Conference (SWECC), the South West Elite Association (SWELA)¹⁰, the Southwest Youth League (SWYL)¹¹ and the South West Forum rejected a return to the pre-1972 two-state federal system. They, however, wanted either a ten-state (ten-region) federal structure with the South West separate from the North West or failing that, they were prepared to settle for an extensive decentralization as stipulated in the 1996 Constitution.

The position of the South West Chiefs, elite and the population was reiterated, once more, on Saturday, 25 August 2018 in a meeting, christened the South West Forum, which held in the Buea Mountain Hotel. The Forum could not mask the ineffectiveness of the platitudes from the South West Chiefs and elite and their failure to bury their individual divisive political/economic interests for the common good of the region in particular and Cameroon in general. The South West Chiefs and elite held an earlier meeting in Yaounde on Saturday, 11 August 2018 to discuss issues that plagued the region. Many political pundits felt that it was an aberration that Chiefs and elite left

10 The South West Elite Association (SWELA) in 1991 officially positioned itself for a ten autonomous regions. No SWELA meeting revisited the 1991 position.

11 The Southwest Youth League was created on 20 November 2020 and it was officially recognised by the Government on 25 November 2020 by Prefectural Order No. 1442/G. 37/C 84/VOL 1/ SAAJP. Its first executive officials included the following: Esua Kisito Mbong as Regional President; Dr. Akem Henry M. Egbe as Regional Vice President; Prince Derrick Jackai II as Regional Secretary-General and Dielle Leris as Assistant Regional Secretary-General.

the South West Region and travelled to Yaounde to hold their meeting as if there was no safe town in the region to host such a meeting. By holding the meeting in Yaounde when the average South Westerner expected the chiefs and elite to make a statement on the burning issues that affected the region, they gave the perception that most of the chiefs and elite had abandoned their towns and villages for their safety in Douala and Yaounde; except, of course, those whose “call for duty” necessitated their being in Yaounde or Douala.

The disunity within the South West body-politic could not have been better exhibited. This point was explicitly and bluntly stated by the Mayor of Buea, Ekema Patrick Esunge¹², in his welcome speech to the participants at the Forum when he said:

I must be frank to say here that the lackluster and irresponsible manner in which our most formerly revered association [s] ... SWELA and SWECC have been egocentrically involved in the management of the socio-cultural and political affairs within our region rendered them moribund and thus lack the moral responsibility to bring the people together... the silence of our elite in the heart of the current terrorist actions in our region cannot be taken for granted *Our enemies are not all that far, we have some seated here amongst us* [Emphasis added].¹³

The South West Forum, nonetheless, deliberated and resolved, amongst others, as follows:

- i. The South West supported a regional structure where the indigenes would be able to manage their own local development and elect their local representatives;

12 Patrick Esunge Ekema (born in September 1976 in Buea and died in October 2019 in Douala) obtained his B.A and M.A. Degrees from the University of Buea, Cameroon. He was a fervent militant of the ruling CPDM and was elected Mayor of Buea in 2013. He was, before his death, a member of the Board of CAMWATER and a member of the National Decentralization Council. The South Chiefs Conference gave him the title of *Nyamato Kpwatolo*, “Great Warrior”. He was also titled *Janea*, “One who brings good things for his people” by his Wonjoku village in Buea Sub-Division. As the Mayor of Buea, he bravely fought the separatists and publicly challenged them to execute their slogan, “My Trip To Buea,” (MTTB). His fearlessness in combating the secessionists saved Buea and the Buea population from the ravages of Amba fighters. But in the process of doing so, he collided with several Bakweri elite in-and-out of Fako Division as well as a reasonable proportion of the population in Buea because of his biting acidic blunt language. Many of the Bakweri elite in-and-out of Buea and a sizable proportion of the population of Buea privately “celebrated” his sudden death on Sunday, 27 October 2019 in Douala.

13 Ekema Patrick Esunge, “A Welcome Speech Presented by the Lord Mayor of Buea Municipality Mr. Ekema Patrick Esunge on the occasion of the South West Region Grand Conference on Saturday, 25th of August 2018 at the Buea Mountain Hotel.”

- ii. The South West Region out rightly rejected and denounced the option of secession or a two-state federation;
- iii. The South West people dissociated themselves from the so-called State of Ambazonia;
- iv. The South West Region supported the option of dialogue in resolving the Anglophone crisis and the promotion of the ideals of a “One and Indivisible Cameroon”;
- v. The South West Region would not play host to the Anglophone General Conference (AGC) slated to hold in Buea;
- vi. The South West proposed a better management of the demographics of the South West through community-based land strategy; and,
- vii. Called on non-indigenes who are causing havoc in the South West to lay down their arms and desist from wicked acts and live-in peace in the South West.
- viii. Appealed to the government to increase the number of troops in the region.¹⁴

In January 2018, the Anglophone Crisis took another ugly twist with the arrest of Julius Ayuk Tabe and ten other members of the SCACUF in Nera Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria; they were transferred to Yaounde. The arrest of Ayuk Tabe and the others did not change the situation on the ground. In July 2018, the secessionists in the diaspora formed the Southern Cameroons Governing Council and given the arrest of Julius Ayuk Tabe, Samuel Sako was appointed the Acting President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia; and, he appointed his “Cabinet of Ministers.” The assassination of some members of the national defense and security forces increased; the abduction of civil servants and school teachers and pupils increased and some of them were murdered in cold blood. The national defence and security forces responded in some cases with brute military force which resulted in untold sufferings to the population.

In May 2018, the Chairperson of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedom, Dr Divine Banda Chemuta, decried the violation of human rights saying: “The state of human rights in Cameroon... is worrying because of growing insecurity, the army that is supposed to be providing security around schools and work places is there but” abduction and destruction still occurred.¹⁵ In June 2018, the British House of Commons was reminded that the United Kingdom, as the former Administering Authority of the Southern Cameroons, retained the “responsibility for what happens to its former subjects.”¹⁶

14 *Eden*, No. 1078, Monday, 27 August 2018, 6-7; *The Post*, No. 01940, Monday, 27 August 2018, 8.

15 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1407, Wednesday, 09 May 2018, 3.

16 *The Guardian Post*, No. 1427, Monday, 11 June 2018, 4.

Government Addressed the Crisis

In his 31 December 2016 New Year Address to the Nation, President Biya, in reference to the Anglophone Crisis, said: "Like any human endeavour, our experience is not perfect. There are aspects that can be improved. *We should therefore listen to each other.* Constructive ideas, to the exclusion, however, of those that would affect the form of our state" [Emphasis added].¹⁷ The Ghogomo Ad-hoc Committee, the lawyers and the teachers' trade unions finally agreed on a set of recommendations which the government implemented or agreed to implement. In an endeavour to facilitate and speed up the resolution of the crisis, President Biya created a National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism by Decree No. 2017/013 of 23 January 2017.

The Decree of 26 Articles in eight chapters called on the Commission, in Article 3 (2), "to be responsible, notably, for submitting reports and recommendations on issues relating to the protection and promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism to the President of the Republic and the Government"¹⁸ The creation of the Commission drew mixed feelings. Some Cameroonians welcomed its creation while others felt that it was nothing more than a toothless dog. It was not directed towards addressing the problems raised by either the teachers or the lawyers. Meanwhile, on 20 June 2018, Prime Minister Yang unveiled the "Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan in the North West and South West Regions 2018" with an estimated budget of 12,716,500,000 francs CFA. The Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan concerned "internally displaced persons... in the South West Region and... the North West Region... [as well as] victims of abuses in the host localities and community."¹⁹ This, notwithstanding, the armed conflict between the forces of law and order, on the one hand, and secessionist militia groups, on the other, continued unabated.

The African Union (AU) lauded the humanitarian assistance which the government announced and promised "to find a way out of the crisis and how... [it] could support a short term answer."²⁰ Nonetheless, Madagascar's Permanent Representative at the AU, Alain Djacoba Tchindrazanarivelo, intimated that humanitarian assistance would be hugely beneficial and productive after the problem would have been solved through dialogue.²¹ The government, the churches and some well-intentioned Cameroonians,

17 "Head of State's New Year Message."

18 *Cameroon Tribune*, No.11270/7469, Tuesday/Mardi, January 24 janvier 2017, 4.

19 Government of Cameroon, "Emergency Humanitarian Assistance."

20 *The Star*, Vol. 2, No.497, Monday, 10 September 2018, 8.

21 *Ibid.*

nonetheless, kept on searching for an all-inclusive meaningful dialogue which guaranteed the unity and territorial integrity of the country; definitely, in keeping with the Chinese proverb that: "All wars end where they should have started. That is, around a negotiating/ dialoguing table." It was within this context that Christian Cardinal Tumi called for an Anglophone General Conference (AGC).²²

Search for Peace

On 25 July 2018, Christian Cardinal Tumi; Rev. George Fochang Babila, the Synod Clerk of the PCC; Imam Tukur Mohammed Adamu of the Bamenda Central Mosque; and, Imam Alhadji Mohammed Aboubakar, Chief Imam of the Buea Central Mosque, convened an "Anglophone General Conference [AGC] for 29 and 30 August 2018 in Promotion of Peace in Cameroon." The conveners gave Dr. Simon Munzu the responsibility of organizing the conference in Buea. According to the conveners, the goal of the conference was to "hold a preparatory general conference in order to agree on the issues to be examined at the national dialogue on the Anglophone Problem... [and] fervently appeal to the President of the Republic...to organize such a dialogue as soon as possible."²³

The conveners limited the participation in the AGC to the following Cameroonians:

- a) Those whose ancestral origins are within one of the thirteen divisions of the territory that today constitute the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon; or
- b) Those whose parents or grandparents, not having their ancestral origins in one of the thirteen divisions of the Southwest and Northwest regions, settled permanently in this territory as at 1 October 1961.²⁴

The "Public Announcement" of the conference drew swift mixed reactions. The Ambazonians fighting for secession and independence rejected it out rightly and sent out threats to Dr. Munzu. The MoRISC, through its spokesperson, sent an open message to Cardinal Tumi saying: "A free Ambazonia is not an option. It is the only option. Ambazonians shall live free or die."²⁵ The Mayor of Buea denounced the AGC and declared that it would not hold in Buea and that the conveners should take it to Bamenda. The government, on the other hand, said it had always supported dialogue.

22 Unfortunately, the Anglophone General Conference (AGC) was regarded in certain quarters as a smokescreen for the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC) given the abbreviation "AGC."

23 The Conveners, "Public Announcement Convening an Anglophone General Conference for 29 and 30 August 2018 in Buea in Promotion of Peace in Cameroon," Douala, 25 July 2018.

24 Ibid.

25 MoRISC Spokesperson, "Public Message."

On 8 August 2018, Cardinal Tumi signed a *Press Release* on behalf of the conveners postponing the conference to 21-22 November 2018. In the *Press Release*, the conveners acknowledged the skepticism, doubt and hostility expressed by some Cameroonians with regard to the AGC but noted, with deep satisfaction, that the government welcomed it although with reservations “on some requests.” In addition, the conveners took comfort, according to the *Press Release*, that the initiative was welcomed by Cameroonians in all the ten regions as well as political parties, regardless of their political coloration. The postponement, according to the *Press Release*, was because of the need for enough time to better prepare and organize the conference.²⁶ The AGC never held at the end of the day. The government, nonetheless, took some measures which were aimed at creating an acceptable atmosphere for an all-inclusive dialogue.

Steps to Speed up Resolution of the Crisis

Creation of National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee

On 30 November 2018, President Biya signed a presidential decree creating a National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee (NDDRC) with a Management Committee under the authority of the Prime Minister. The NDDRC had regional centres in Bamenda, Buea and Mora with the possibility of setting up other centres. The Committee was responsible for organizing, supervising and managing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-fighters of Boko Haram, and armed groups in the North West and South West Regions who were willing to “lay down their arms” as Biya announced on 6 November 2018 during his inaugural address.

The Management Committee was called upon to set up and run cantonment sites for ex-fighters, supervise them, and provide multifaceted assistance to them. Reintegration entailed the de-radicalization of ex-fighters and reintegrating them into the civilian society. The same decree also created a National Coordination Committee under a National Coordinator who was assisted by a Deputy.²⁷ The Management Committee and the National Coordination Committee had an uphill task because fighting still raged when the committees were created; dialogue or negotiation was not forthcoming; there was no cease-fire between the government security and defence forces and the secessionist fighters; and, an enabling climate did not exist for the NDDRC to work effectively. The arrest of some Anglophones who were accused of being linked to the crisis, directly or indirectly, was presented by the secessionists as a hindrance to peace and demanded their release. It was believed that a gesture of goodwill on the part of the

²⁶ Christian Cardinal Tumi, *Press Release*, 8th August 2018, Douala.

²⁷ *The Guardian Post*, No. 1548, Monday, 3 December 2018, 5.

government by setting them free would advance the quest for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Although the government appealed to secessionist fighters to lay down their weapons and be registered in the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NDDR) Centre in either Bamenda or Buea in order for the government to ensure their peaceful and serene reintegration into the community, the government failed, according to some ex-fighters, to keep to its promise. During the Major National Dialogue in Yaounde in September-October 2019, several ex-fighters made known the poor and shabby conditions they experienced in the centres but government authorities dismissed them as false. On 1st February 2021, ex-Amba fighters who were lodged at the NDDR Centre in Buea went on strike in protest against the government's unfulfilled promises. On 15 February 2021, it was the turn of ex-Amba fighters at the NDDR Centre in Bamenda. Both in Buea and Bamenda, the ex-Amba fighters protested because of:

- a) The poor living conditions;
- b) The failure of the government to respect the promises it made to the fighters before they laid down their weapons;
- c) The government failed to give them financial assistance; and,
- d) The government was yet to train them for the job market or be self-reliant.²⁸

The prolonged armed conflict in the North West and South West Regions was not foreseen by the Cameroon government, and much less by the separatists. As the crisis dragged on, the population gradually turned against the separatist fighters. Some of the Amba fighters recognised the futility of the armed struggle which was falsely premised on the independence of the North West and South West Regions. In spite of the failure of the government to respect some of the promises it made to Amba fighters who laid down their weapons as was evident in their public protests in the Bamenda and Buea NDDR Centres, in March 2021, Elangwe Godwin Motoko, popularly known as "General Goddy" within Amba milieu, laid down his weapons.

He handed himself to the SDO for Meme Division and rejected violence.²⁹ He promised to ask other Amba fighters who were still in the bushes to lay down their arms. "General

28 *The Sun*, No. 0637, Wednesday, 17 February 2021, 7; *Eden*, No. 1197, Wednesday, 17 February 2021, 5; *The PostWeekENDER*, No.02162, Friday, 19 February 2021, 10.

29 Elangwe Godwin Motoko, popularly known as "General Goddy", was among the first group of secessionist fighters who were recruited and trained in Nigeria. Chief Ivens Nofuruh of Nake Bokoko in Meme Division was instrumental in getting "General Goddy" to lay down his arms.

Goddy” was a ferocious “General” who terrorised the population of Bole, Kwa- Kwa, Nake, Kombone and other enclave localities in Meme Division.³⁰ It should, however, be noted that “General Goddy” surrendered but none of his fighters accompanied him. In fact, it was reported that he decamped and took with him “the money the villagers contributed to assist the struggle.” In retaliation, Amba fighters “set his residence ablaze” and several “‘women’ [whom] he ‘married,’ under duress, also escaped.”³¹

Biya Ordered Discontinuance of Court Proceedings for Misdemeanours, December 2018

The secessionist group of Julius Ayuk Tabe that was arrested in Nigeria appeared, once more, in the Yaounde Military Tribunal on 6 December 2018. Ayuk Tabe and his group were charged with, amongst others: secession; promoting secession; acts of terrorism; financing acts of terrorism; revolution; insurrection; hostility against the state; and, creation of armed groups. The Ayuk Tabe group rejected their Cameroonian nationality. After brief exchanges, the case was adjourned to 10 January 2019.

On 13 December 2018, President Biya, through the Secretary-General of the Presidency, Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, ordered the discontinuance of proceedings at the Military Tribunals. According to a communiqué signed by Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, the President’s “decision” concerned 289 persons arrested for misdemeanors in connection with the crisis in the North West and South West Regions. The “decision” permitted the 289 Cameroonians to “renounce violence and return to the right path... [and] to once more participate in the lofty task of nation-building.” President Biya, according to the communiqué, re-affirmed “his determination to relentlessly pursue his efforts... [to ensure] a peaceful solution to the crisis affecting these regions....”³²

The 289 detainees were in the following central prisons: 16 in Bafoussam, 49 in Bamenda, 99 in Buea, 14 in Douala, 82 in the Yaounde Central Prison, three (3) in the Yaounde Principal Prison, 33 at the Gendarmerie in Yaounde and two (2) in the judiciary police in Yaounde.³³ The 289 Cameroonians involved in the “decision” excluded criminals, assassins, dangerous terrorists and those who directed and planned the heinous security crisis in the North West and South West Regions.³⁴ The “decision” was, broadly

30 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2085, Wednesday, 03 March 2021, 1.

31 *The Star*, No. 623, Monday, 8 March 2021, 4.

32 Minister, Secretary-General of the Presidency of the Republic, “*Press Release*,” 13 December 2018, Yaounde.

33 Le Ministre Délégué à la Présidence chargé de la Défense, *Communiqué*, 13 décembre 2018, Yaoundé.

34 *Ibid.* It should be noted that President Biya talked of 289 detainees while the total number ad-

speaking, regarded as a positive step but its impact on the crisis was doubtful especially because the initial reaction from some secessionist leaders was negative. However, in Mundemba Sub-Division in Ndian, the leader of the secessionist fighters in Ndian I Section, "General Dady Diballa," told the population of Besingi and Meka Ngolo that he and his fighters accepted President Biya's "peace moves." He took the commitment, in front of the Divisional Officer, that he would get his fighters out of the forest and "lay down their arms."

Prime Minister Ngute visited North West and South West Regions

The search for a peaceful resolution of the Anglophone Crisis was compounded by the distrust which the government nursed towards Cameroonian peace crusaders like Christian Cardinal Tumi and the churches. Both the government and the secessionists failed to meet for a frank conversation on the crisis despite several public statements by the government expressing its willingness for dialogue. However, in May 2019, there was a slight shift in the government's strategy when Prime Minister Chief/Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute visited Bamenda, Bambili, Buea, Limbe and Kumba. The new Prime Minister interacted with the local population in these towns and listened to their petitions and complaints.

He told the population that President Biya was opened to dialogue; Biya was committed to resolving the crisis; and, that Biya wanted peace to return to the North West and South West Regions. But President Biya, the Prime Minister continued, did not want the disintegration of the country. In June 2019, an organization of Cameroonian Women and Mothers for Peace met in Yaounde and, through their spokesperson Prof. Justine Difo Tchunkam, called "for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire by all parties and the putting in place ...[of] an inclusive and constructive dialogue open to sons and daughters" of Cameroon. The organisation pledged "to make every woman and every mother in the [North West and South West] conflict zones a real architect of peace."³⁵ This was easier said than done as partisan politics did not help the women in their quest for peace.

Later in July 2019, Wilfred Tassang, in a letter to all Ambazonian leaders and fighters, called for unity and advised that should the government call for negotiations, the Ambazonian negotiating team should negotiate as if the "10 Nera"³⁶ were dead. He

vanced by the Minister Delegate in-charge of Defence at the Presidency was 298. The Presidential "decision" excluded Julius Ayuk Tabe and his group.

35 *The Post*, No. 02016, Monday, 01 July 2019, 10.

36 The "10 Nera" were Julius Ayuk Tabe, Shufai Blaise Sevidzem Berinyuy, Cheh Augustine Awasum, Henry Kimeng, Fidelis Nde Che, Cornelius Kwanga Njikimbi, Egbe Orok, Nfor Ngala Nfor, Wilfred Fombang Tassang and Elias Ebai Eyambe.

told them to “negotiate as though you were seeking retribution for the more than 30,000 wasted Amba souls.... Our leaders must unite. I truly hope that what we now see staring at us is genuine; talks, dialogue, negotiations.” He called on the leaders and fighters to “unite for the independence of Southern Cameroons without exception.”³⁷

It was evident that the hard core secessionists refused to acknowledge the harsh reality on the ground: that is, the majority of Anglophones did not want the independence of the two regions; the Cameroon government vehemently rejected the dismemberment of the country; and, the international community as evidenced in official statements from the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the Commonwealth, the US, Britain, France, Russia, China, Germany, etc. rejected the call for the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions.

Anglophones Grappled with Options

The situation in the two regions led interested stakeholders within and outside Cameroon to call for dialogue as secessionist fighters became armed bandits who fought amongst and between themselves with horrible deadly consequences. With enormous social, economic and human devastation and about 4,000 deaths; 700,000 IDPs; and, more than 25,000 refugees in Nigeria, four options were available for the resolution of the crisis namely: secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions; federalism; decentralization; and, confederation.

Secession and Independence

This option was very attractive to some Anglophones who took the extremist position that “Enough is enough.” They recounted the poor and shabby treatment of Anglophones by the Francophone-led governments (Ahidjo and Biya) since 1961. The secessionists argued that secession would enable them “run and manage their affairs” according to the Anglo-Saxon ideals, values and culture. In fact, they argued that federalism was killed in 1972 and they wanted nothing short of secession and independence; hence, their decision to resort to armed insurrection. This was the position of the SCNC and the secret resolution of AAC II adopted in 1994.

However, several drawbacks made secession unattainable. First of all, the Biya government unequivocally rejected secession for it affected the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon. Secondly, there was no question that the silent majority of South Westerners, as opposed to the population in/or of the South West Region, was opposed to living in one state as an independent country with North Westerners.³⁸ The majority

³⁷ *The Sun*, No. 0551, Monday, 22 July 2019, 2.

³⁸ Although this position was, broadly speaking, expressed by a majority of South Westerners, it

of South Westerners did not hesitate to recall, rightly or wrongly, the ill-treatment they received from North Westerners during the duration of Southern Cameroons/West Cameroon from 1959 to 1972 when North Westerners called the shots in the territory. The opponents of secession argued that a new “struggle” for separation by South Westerners would be inevitable 30-50 years down the road. The financial misappropriation of funds; the quest for power and bickering amongst the secessionist leaders in the diaspora who directed and financed the secession; the abduction of Anglophones by secessionist fighters and, in several cases their assassination; the imposition of various forms of hardship on Anglophones in the North West and South West Regions; the heinous dehumanizing atrocities committed by armed secessionists on Anglophones and videoed by them; and, the deadly confrontations between armed secessionist groups did not inspire confidence in secession.

Federalism

The federalists insisted on upholding and protecting the unity and territorial integrity of the nation. They argued, unlike those opposed to it, that federalism would not impair the territorial integrity of the country and that it was not “a cover” for secession. In a federal system, each federated state or region would run and manage its own affairs with specified agreed minimum intervention from the centre. The principles and articles dealing with minimum intervention from the centre would be explicitly stated and written in the constitution including a revenue-sharing formula. This option enjoyed the support of a vast majority of South Westerners, a respectable proportion of North Westerners, and Francophones who decried the choking negative effects of centralization and, in some cases, the abject neglect of certain regions or localities.³⁹ Finally, the destiny of each federated state or region would lie in the hands of its administrators and politicians and not those in the centre, the federalists argued.

However, in a federal structure, some regions or states might not be financially viable to run and manage a federal structure. This would be so, the opponents argued, if there were no reasonable collective agreement on financial intervention from the centre, with all the risks it entailed. The opponents of federalism argued that a federal system would require constitutional guarantees to respect and protect the recognized interests

did not find favour with some Anglophones who tried to downplay the North West/ South West divide.

- 39 The number of federated states or regions did not bother the federalists. They generally agreed that the ten regions should be transformed into ten federated states or regions and more could be created. However, the vast majority of South Westerners, while they did not argue on the number of federated regions or states, insisted that South West should be a state or region in its own right; a position which did not get unqualified support from a vast majority of North Westerners.

and rights of “small and weak” federated regions or states. Finally, *federalism* would work only if there were federalists.

In 2021, a group of Anglophones in-and-out of Cameroon founded the Coalition of Cameroon Federalist Groups & Activists (CCFGA). This group regarded federalism as the bedrock to the solution of the Anglophone Problem/Crisis. However, the CCFGA were unwilling to clearly indicate the number of states they wanted in Cameroon in their “federal concept.” Furthermore, it was not a secret that some South Westerners did not want the North West and South West Regions to form one federal state as was the case between 1961 and 1972. With the example in Cameroon’s next door neighbour, Nigeria, where federalism failed to solve the multiple political, religious, social and economic cleavages, federalism as a system of government was not regarded as the only solution to the Anglophone Problem/Crisis. Federalism, however, was the most popular and most likely option to be attained to resolve the crisis, but proponents of federalism in the government and in the decision-making circle were in short supply.

Decentralisation

This option, according to the decentralists, would preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the country as opposed to secession and federalism. The decentralists pointed out that the centre would be able to ensure equal and balanced development. The January 1996 Constitution clearly provided for decentralisation but more than twenty (20) years after, decentralisation was only in the books but not on the ground. The decentralists wanted to keep as much power as possible with the centre.

In addition, “small and weak” states or regions in terms of financial viability as well as their interests and rights would be easily protected by the centre which would retain maximum powers of intervention in the management of the affairs of the states or regions; some limited powers, however, would be given to the states or regions. The lack of adequate financial viability by “poor” regions or states made decentralization palatable to the decentralists. However, the opponents of decentralization argued that it had all the negative elements of centralization which Cameroonians, both Anglophones and Francophones, experienced since 1961 but more especially after 1972. Finally, decentralization was regarded as a Trojan horse for a centralized system especially if the principles were not explicitly enshrined in the constitution.

Confederation

In negotiating for the reunification between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons, Foncha, from time-to-time, talked of a *loose federation* or *confederation*. A confederation is a union of states which accept a common authority in certain subjects which affect all the states in the confederation such as foreign/external affairs. It is

a union of sovereign states and the component states retain their sovereignty. Each component state has the legal right to secede through an agreed process. The citizens obey only one Government; that of their own state. According to Appadorai, “the orders of the common authority are binding” to the citizens of a component state.” Appadorai goes on to say that the “orders are binding” only in so far as they are imposed “on them by the Government of” their own state.⁴⁰ Confederation is a loose union and, generally, less stable compared to a federation. But the option of a *confederation* did not attract many supporters.

Conclusion

The Anglophone Problem which degenerated into a devastating crisis after November 2016 was complicated because of the reluctance by the Ahidjo and Biya governments to recognize and accept that there was an Anglophone Problem; in fact, the Biya government initially refused to accord it the seriousness it deserved. The outbreak of the crisis in November 2016, although triggered by corporate/trade union grievances, was essentially the need for political and constitutional changes in the management of the polity to take into account and reflect the bi-cultural and bi-judicial nature of the two components of the state of Cameroon.

While the government implemented measures to address some of the corporate grievances, the fundamental problem was constitutional: the form of the State. This was recognized by a vast majority of Anglophones and a respectable proportion of Francophones. The discussion on addressing the Anglophone Problem and crisis revolved around four demands from the people of the North West and South West Regions: secession and independence; federal system (federation); decentralization in a unitary system; and, confederation. These demands and the deepening crisis led to calls for an all-inclusive dialogue for Cameroonians to address their problem.

40 Appadorai, *The Substance of Politics*, 498.

BIYA CONVENED A MAJOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Introduction

In examining the grievances presented by the Common Law Lawyers and the Anglophone Teachers' Unions, the government initiated and participated in peace negotiations, though secretly in most cases, in the quest for a solution. In September/October 2019, the famous Major National Dialogue was held. This took place within the context of an escalated armed conflict.

On the Road to the Major National Dialogue

The several calls for an all-inclusive dialogue from Cameroon's political and civil society leaders, religious leaders, the international community and the Prime Minister's visit to the North West and South West Regions, once more, drove home the urgent need for a national round-table conversation without pre-conditions. On 10 September 2019, President Biya addressed the Cameroonian people saying:

[The] crisis was triggered by corporate demands made by lawyers and teachers calling for the translation of the OHADA Uniform Acts into English and *the preservation of the specificity of the Anglo-Saxon judicial and educational systems in the two [Anglophone] regions* I have spared no effort ... in seeking ways and means for its peaceful resolution ... I extend a hand of peace to members of the armed groups by calling on them to lay down their arms ... I have decided to convene... *a major national dialogue ... to seek ways and means of meeting the high aspirations of the people of the North-West and South-West Regions but also of all other components of our Nation. The dialogue in question will mainly concern the situation in the North-West and South-West Regions ...* [Emphasis added].¹

Biya's message was welcomed by the UN Secretary-General who reiterated "the readiness of the United Nations to support the dialogue process." The African Union Commission supported "Cameroon in seeking a consensual and sustainable solution to preserve the unity and territorial integrity" of the territory; the Economic Community

¹ Civil Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic, *Head of State's Message to the Nation* (Yaounde: n.p., 2019), 1-10.

of Central African States (ECCAS) called on Cameroonians “to privilege the dialogue.” The Commonwealth said it was ready to assist Cameroonians and called “on all parties to fully participate in the process;” *La Francophone* encouraged “all Cameroonian stakeholders, including the diaspora to engage constructively in all stages of this dialogue;” and the European Union indicated that it supported “All efforts in this direction, in coordination with its international and regional partners.”² Cameroon’s main political parties, religious bodies, civil society organizations and traditional authorities supported the call for a national dialogue.

Biya gave the responsibility of the organization of the Major National Dialogue (MND) to Prime Minister Dion Ngute who was also the Chairperson of the MND. Cameroonians welcomed the convening of the MND with great relief. Elites of the ten regions concerted and adopted the positions of their regions. The South West Region, for example, adopted a series of recommendations which prominently featured constitutional amendments to provide for a ten-region federation. Prime Minister Dion Ngute also consulted members of government especially those from the North West and South West Regions to get their views and recommendations. He also received proposals from religious bodies, political parties, socio-economic groups, traditional authorities, trade unions and delegations from the ten regions.

The Major National Dialogue brought together a wide range of personalities: parliamentarians, politicians, opinion leaders, intellectuals/academicians, economic operators, traditional and religious authorities, members of the diaspora, trade unionists, professional organisations and the secessionist fighters who had laid down their arms. On the instructions of President Biya, 75% of the participants came from the North West and South West regions (Anglophones) and 5% from the diaspora. Some of the secessionist frontline leaders were invited but they rejected the invitation. They argued that their precondition of the independence of the North West and South West Regions was not guaranteed.

The plenary session was opened by Prime Minister Dion Ngute and Chairperson of the Major National Dialogue (MND). In his opening statement, Dion Ngute said:

The gravity of the situation in the North-West and South-West Regions must challenge and concern us ... but it must [also] oblige us all ... to restore peace and tranquility in these two Regions. It is therefore mindful of our capacity and determination to take up this important challenge ... to meet the deep aspirations of the people of the North-West and South-West

² Civil Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic, *Time of the Major National Dialogue* (Yaounde: n.p., 2019) 13-18.

Regions and of all the other components of the Nation [that this MND is organized] [Emphasis added].³

Dion Ngute's statement was followed by the keynote address from Dr. Simon Munzu who presented the main and demanding task of the Major National Dialogue. In his address, Dr. Munzu forthrightly stated:

We face the challenge of recognizing that in our nation we do not have all the angels on one side and all the devils on the other....We face the challenge of teaching the history of our country to its people... and thus... [create] the conditions for the avoidance of distortion and truncating of this same history by perverse forces with-in and outside the country... we should make a heroic start at meeting these challenges....

Our efforts should be guided by two specific objectives: ... restore to the territory and people of the North West and South West regions their sense of identity in a Cameroon that is united in its diversity; ... and respond positively to the aspirations of each region of Cameroon to a greater degree of autonomy.... Some would say that the two specific objectives... are to be obtained through decentralization of the unitary state ... [others that] they are best achieved through federation... [others through] confederation... the responsibility for addressing the situation in the North West and South West regions is primarily that of the Cameroonian State and people [Emphasis added].⁴

It was obvious that the appalling situation in the North West and South West Regions dominated the worries of Cameroonians. At the MND, Barrister Agbor Felix Nkongho dissected the problem in the following words:

[At] this crucial moment in the history of our country, we should bear in mind and have the humility to admit that might [may not] always be right.... The people of the former Southern Cameroons are looking at us for a long-lasting and permanent solution to their problems....

The choices we make will have consequences on the lives of millions of Anglophone Cameroonians... let us finally and resolutely make the people of

3 *Municipal Updates*, Bi-weekly, Vol. 3, No. 016, Wednesday, 09 October 2019, 17, "State of His Excellency Joseph Dion Ngute, Prime Minister and Head of Government, on the Occasion of the Opening of the Major National Dialogue."

4 *Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No.016, "Keynote Address Delivered by Dr. Simon Munzu on 'the Crisis in the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon: Lessons from our past and Vision for our future'."

*the former Southern Cameroons full-fledged citizens of this fledging Republic, with equal rights, dreams and aspirations. Or deal with the consequences of our inaction [Emphasis added].*⁵

The general consensus was that Cameroonians should solve their problems and the major preoccupation was the crisis that rocked the North West and South West Regions. This was evident in the statements by the nine Cameroonians who spoke after the Chairperson's opening statement.⁶

The MND ran from 30 September to 4 October 2019 and eight commissions were created: the Bilingualism, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion; the Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced persons; the Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas; Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex combatants; the Role of the Diaspora in the Crisis and in the country's Development; and, the Decentralization and Local Development. It was generally felt that the Decentralization and Local development Commission was the heart of the MND; it was expected to address the core issue of the Anglophone Problem which triggered the crisis and "seek ways and means of meeting the high aspirations of the people of the North-West and South-West regions but also of all the other components" of the nation. Unfortunately, with regard to the Decentralization and Local development Commission, it was easier said than done.

At the end of the four-day working session, the various commissions presented their reports and recommendations:

- i. The Bilingualism, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion chaired by Hon. Joshua Osih recommended that the country should enhance the practice of bilingualism, promote cultural diversity and strengthen national social cohesion;
- ii. The Educational System Commission chaired by Prof. Dorothy L. Njeuma called for educational reforms which would integrate the need to keep the two educational systems afloat and recognize the unique strengths and specificities of each sub-system of education. The commission recommended the teaching of Cameroon history at all levels of education in Cameroon. It also recommended that teachers' trade unions should work in collaboration with the government and also regulate the proliferation of teacher's trade unions;

5 *Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 016, 24.

6 The nine speakers were: Peter Mafany Musonge, Sultan Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, Nfon Victor E. Mukete, Dr. Simon Munzu, Ni John Fru Ndi, René Ze Nguelé, Boubakary Abdoulaye, Saidou Boukar, René Effa, Ms Fadimatou Iyawa, Christian Cardinal Tumi, Chief Atem Ebako and ex-secessionist fighter Yanick Kawa.

- iii. The Judicial System Commission was headed by Lawyer Benjamin Itoe and proposed that all legal documents should be translated into both official languages, English and French. It recommended the consideration of the level of English language proficiency and the mastery of the Common Law legal system in the appointment and/or transfer of judiciary staff to the North West and South West Regions; the creation of a law school and upgrading the Common Law section of the Supreme Court;
- iv. The Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Commission had Christian Cardinal Tumi as its chairperson. The commission recommended the implementation of measures geared towards granting general amnesty to all those arrested and/or imprisoned as a result of the Anglophone Crisis;
- v. The Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas Commission was chaired by Dr. Simon Munzu. It recommended the establishment of a programme for the reconstruction and development of the North West, South West and Far North regions; the immediate resumption of abandoned projects in the two Anglophone regions because of the crisis; the rehabilitation of public facilities and public infrastructures; the reconstruction of priority economic structures (CDC, PAMOL, UNVDA, SEMRY, SODECOTON); and, compensation for losses suffered by private individuals due to the Crisis;
- vi. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-combatants Commission was chaired by Prof. Saibou Moussa. The commission recommended the elaboration and implementation of a holistic communication strategy with emphasis on peace, establish a link between the youth, the CNDDR and the national defence and security forces, reinforce the fight against the trafficking of arms and integrate the aspect of Community Violence reduction in the DDR programme;
- vii. The Role of the Diaspora in the Crisis and in the Country's Development was chaired by Prof. Jean-Louis Amougou Atangana. It recommended the revision of the nationality code to allow for dual or multiple nationality and adopt the principle of parliamentary and governmental representation of the Diaspora; and,
- viii. The Decentralization and Local Development Commission⁷ was chaired by Philip Ngole Ngwese. The commission carried with it the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of Cameroonians and more especially Anglophones. The debates in the commission were heated and revolved around the issue of discussing the form

⁷ *Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 016, 8-10.

of the state in order to address the "high aspirations of the people of the North-West and South-West Regions." The issue was supported by all Anglophones in the Commission and a respectable number of Francophones.

The crux of the matter was explicitly stated by Victor Julius Ngoh as follows:

The [Anglophone] problem is the failure of successive governments to allow the political system, economic system, social system, educational system and legal system which the people of the then Southern Cameroons took to [the] union in Foumban in July 1961 and *it was agreed that those systems would operate in West Cameroon while the French system should operate in East Cameroon and the two systems would only blend at the centre in a federal system...we can handle the form of the states* as Article 2...explicitly states that *sovereignty lies with the Cameroonian people...* [Emphasis added].⁸

Although the argument which was advanced by Ngoh was shared by all the Anglophones and some Francophones in the commission, the chairperson overruled it; some Anglophones walked out of the commission but Minister Philippe Mbarga Mboa and President Garga Haman Adjii of the Alliance for Democracy and Development (ADD) successfully persuaded them to return to the commission.

Finally, the commission recommended the adoption of the concept of a Special Status for the North West and South West Regions as provided for in Section 62(2) of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon. A motion that the commission should recommend the contents of the Special Status was turned down by the chairperson. The commission failed to provide what the contents of the Special Status should contain and recommended the setting up of a follow-up committee. The North West and South West Regions went to the MND in dispersed rang which was detrimental to the people of the two regions who wanted to uphold and protect their common Anglo-Saxon culture, values and norms. The failure of the people of the two regions to present a united stance at the MND was their trademark since the days of the July 1961 Foumban Conference.

Implementation of MND Recommendations

The recommendations from the eight commissions were many and varied. Some of the corporate grievances of the teachers and lawyers were addressed before the MND ended; others were addressed after the MND ended while others were yet to be addressed. One

⁸ Ibid., 24. Victor Julius Ngoh is professor of history and has published extensively on the political history of Cameroon especially on former Southern Cameroons.

year after the MND ended. Biya halted all court proceedings against 333 detainees of the Anglophone Crisis on 4 October 2019 and on 5 October 2019, Prof. Maurice Kamto and 102 militants of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) were released from detention and court proceedings halted against them.⁹ In December 2019, Biya signed two laws: Law 2019/019 of 24 December 2019 on the Promotion of Official Languages in Cameroon and Law 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities. The draft on the “Promotion of Official Languages in Cameroon” was initially roundly rejected by both the National Assembly and Senate. The version which comprised 30 sections was finally signed into law but, unfortunately, it contained serious lapses.

Law No. 2019/024 to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities

The long-awaited law on the Special Status was signed as “Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 to Institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities.” It was expected that the law on “the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities” would address the ills and problems experienced by Anglophones in the North West and South West Regions. The law set in motion the provisions provided for in the 1996 Constitution. It addressed Regional and Local Authorities and more specifically, it provided for a Special Status for the North West and South West Regions because of “the specificities of certain regions [the North-West and South -West Regions]” as provided for in Article 62(2) in the 1996 Constitution.

The drafters of the law failed to provide for a genuine Special Status and they ended up with a relatively extensive decentralization which did not address the root cause (s) of the Anglophone Problem. Cardinal Tumi, who initially supported a return to the two-state federal structure as a solution to the crisis, gradually moved away from the two-state position and embraced the concept of decentralisation. In December 2020, he stated that: “Effective decentralisation has the potential to enhance national unity and social cohesion. Decentralisation has not only thrived in some parts of the world, but it has contributed in making great communities.”¹⁰ However, effective decentralisation

9 Prof. Maurice Kamto and some of his militants were arrested not because of the Anglophone Crisis. Kamto and his political party, the CRM, refused to recognize the results of the October 2018 presidential election as proclaimed by the Constitutional Court. Kamto and his militants organize mass demonstrations against the election of President Biya in Douala, Yaounde, Paris and Geneva. Kamto declared himself the winner of the presidential election and the President-elect in Cameroon. Kamto and some CRM militants were eventually arrested.

10 <https://www.cameroonwatch.com/2020/12/10/decentralisation-what-is-in-a-name/> (accessed, 15 December 2020).

thrived and worked “in some parts of the world” because the actors sincerely wanted it to work; such sincere desire was not readily available in Cameroon.

Special Status for the North-West and South-West Regions

The Anglophone Problem and the crisis it generated in October/November 2016 were occasioned by the failure of the Ahidjo and Biya governments to adequately implement and promote a federal system. Both Ahidjo and Foncha had agreed during their numerous discussions and meetings which led to the KNDP victory in February 1961 and the Foumban Constitutional Conference of July 1961 that the union between the Republic of Cameroon and Southern Cameroons would be “on the basis of a federation.” Law No. 2019/024/ of 24 December 2019 provided, in Section 3 (1), that: “The North West and the South West regions shall have a Special Status *based on their language specificity and historical heritage*” [Emphasis added]. The Special Status (SS) also stated in Section 3 (3) that it shall respect the peculiarity “of the Anglophone education system and ... [it shall consider] the specificities of the Anglophone legal system based on Common Law.”

In December 2020, the Minister of Decentralization and Local Development issued “Order No. 000440/0/ MINDDEVEL of 18 Dec 2020 to lay down the standard standing orders for the functioning of the Regional Assembly and the Regional Council.” The Order, in Article 2, stated that the “Regional Council shall be the deliberative organ of the Region” and Article 3 added: “The Regional Assembly shall be the deliberative organ in the North-West and South-West Regions.”¹¹ The Regional Assembly shall, according to Article 47, comprise two houses: the House of Divisional Representatives; and, the House of Chiefs.¹² The law which provided for a Special Status in conformity with Article 62 (2) of the 1996 constitution led to regional elections in the 10 regions of Cameroon with elected municipal councillors constituting the Electoral College.

In spite of threats from secessionist fighters in the North-West and South-West Regions who rejected the elections; and, some political parties, notably the SDF and the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM), which called for the elections to be boycotted, they were, nonetheless, held as planned. One of the casualties of the regional elections in the Anglophone regions was the municipal councillor, Elias Ambi Encho, of Widikum in Momo Division who was assassinated by Amba fighters because he ignored their threats. There were also scattered disturbances in some localities in the North West and South West Regions such as in Akum in Mezam Division; and, Mile 14

11 Minister of Decentralization and Local Government, “Order No. 000440/O/MINDDEVEL of 18 DEC 2020 to lay down the standard standing orders for the functioning of the Regional Assembly and the Regional Council,” Yaounde, 18 December 2020, 1.

12 Ibid., 10-11.

and Mile 15 in the Buea Council Area in Fako Division. The results of the elections in the two Anglophone regions were never in doubt because the ruling CPDM controlled all the municipal councils in the two regions and almost all the fons and chiefs in both regions were either militants/supporters or sympathizers of the CPDM.¹³

The Law on the “General Code of Regional and Local Authorities” provided for 70 members in the House of Divisional Representatives and 20 fons/chiefs in the House of Chiefs. At the end of the elections, the CPDM won all the 70 Divisional Representative seats in both the North West and South West Regions and the fons/chiefs also elected their peers into the House of Chiefs. Elections into the respective Regional Executive Council for the North West and South West Regions produced the results of the pioneer Regional Executive Council members in the North West and South West Regions as presented in Table III. The Electoral College for the Regional Executive Council in each of the two Anglophone regions was made up of the municipal councillors while the fons and chiefs elected their peers into the House of Chiefs. It was generally believed that there were no genuine elections of members into the Regional Executive Council and that the members were appointed before the elections were held.

Although the officials of the Regional Executive Council were presented as having being elected, the elite and population of Meme, apparently let the cat out of the bag when they issued a motion of support and thanks to President Biya and Chairman of the CPDM “for the choice of Zacheus Bakuma Elango [their son], as the pioneer President of the South West Regional Assembly.”¹⁴ President Biya was not a member of the Electoral College and thanking him for the election of Bakuma Elango showed that the President of the Republic and Chairman of the CPDM called the shots and not the members of the Electoral College. The election of the Regional Assembly and the Regional Executive Council, in accordance with the Special Status, did not, however, halt the atrocities in the two regions. The secessionists maintained their armed struggle while friendly countries of Cameroon and the international bodies multiplied calls for an inclusive dialogue.

13 The elections of 2020 saw the victory of the CPDM in both the North West and South West Regions.

14 *Municipal Updates*, Vol. 3, No. 123, Wednesday, 30 December 2020, 5; *The Advocate*, No. 132, Monday, 28 December 2020, 2.

Table III: Regional Executive Council Members of the North-West and South-West Regions

Office	North-West Region	South-West Region
President	Prof. Fru Angwafor Fobuzshi (Mezam Division)	Bakuma Elango Zacheus (Meme Division)
Vice President	Fon Yakum Kevin Bambalong (Ngoketunjia Division)	Chief Atem Ebako (Kupe Manenguba Division)
Commissioner for Economic Development	Ghejung Awunti (Mezam Division)	Gobina Mokoko Simon (Fako Division)
Commissioner for Education, Sports and Cultural Development	Dr. Mrs. Anjou Fru-Manyi Rose (Momo Division)	Takang Walters (Manyu Division)
Commissioner for Health and Social Development	Sakah Fendufe Lydia (Bui Division)	Itoe William (Ndian Division)
Secretaries	Kalak Flavius Boteh (Donga Mantung Division) and Fon Mbahmbi III (Menchum Division)	Limunga Becky Effoe (Fako Division) and Chief Foto Felix (Lebialem Division)
Questor	Wauidum Jude (Boyo Division)	Doctor Mbenchou Tazi Andrew (Lebialem)

Biya Defined the Duties of the Public Independent Conciliator

In December 2020, President Biya signed “Decree No. 2020/773/ of 24 Dec 2020 to lay down conditions for discharge of the duties of Public Independent Conciliator in the North-West and South-West regions.” The decree spelt out the disputes or complaints which the Public Independent Conciliator (PIC) should entertain. He “may intervene only where the following conditions are met”:

- a) The disputes must be between a natural or legal person or a public employee and a regional or council service;
- b) The petitioner must have filed a prior appeal with the body involved in the dispute; and,

c) No competent court must have ruled on the matter.¹⁵

According to Article 4 (1) of the decree, the PIC shall perform the following functions/duties:

- a) Examine and amicably settle disputes between users and regional and council administrators;
- b) Defend and protect the rights and freedoms in the relationship between citizens and the Region or the Councils of the Region;
- c) Discharge and implement measures to prevent and combat any direct or indirect discrimination against users of regional or council services;
- d) Ensure that persons serving in the regional or council administration fulfil their ethical obligations;
- e) Conduct any investigation on the functioning of regional and council services at the request of five parliamentarians or five regional councillors; and,
- f) Prepare an annual report on the state of relations between citizens and regional and council services.¹⁶

The PIC “may not”, according to Article 11 (4), intervene in the following disputes or complaints:

- a) Between private individuals and public services of the state and its branches in the North-West and South-West Regions, or between the said services and their branches;
- a) Between the services of regional or council administrations;
- b) Between local elected officials; and,
- c) Between private individuals.¹⁷

15 President of the Republic, “DECREE No. 2020/773/ of 24 DEC 2020 to lay down conditions for discharge of the duties of Public Independent Conciliator in the North-West and South-West regions,” Yaounde, 24 December 2020, 4.

16 Ibid., 1-2.

17 Ibid., 4.

Analysis of the Special Status

The creation of a Special Status (SS) for the North West and South West Regions as recommended by the MND was expected to address the “high aspirations of the population” of the two regions. Unfortunately, its creation and contents fell short of the expectations of most Anglophones especially those of the “federalist school” and the “independence school;” and, the secessionists roundly condemned and rejected it. Several short-comings were noted in the SS and its implementation by the two schools.

First of all, the Governor was responsible for the supervision of the Regional Assembly while the SDOs supervised Local Councils within their jurisdiction. This, of course, meant that the Governors and the SDOs in the North West and South West Regions, like in the other regions, who were appointed by the President of the Republic and not elected, controlled the elected representatives of the people. Secondly, the Regional Assembly and the Regional Executive Council in the North West and South West Regions, during their deliberations, were not at liberty to reject examining or discussing matters or issues which were only in French given that English and French were/are the official languages. The “language specificity and historical heritage” were, therefore, ignored. Thirdly, for judicial and legal matters relating to the North West and South West Regions, the Regional Assembly and the Regional Executive Council *may* be consulted if laws drafted at the national/central level impacted on the Common Law sub-system. The verb *may*, meant that the national/central level was not obligated to consult them.

The existence of appointed Governors, PICs , SDOs and DOs in the SS regions to operate alongside the elected President of the Regional Executive Council, elected City Council Mayors and elected Municipal Council Mayors inadvertently planted the seeds of discord. The administrative relationship and direction of authority were not clearly defined between the PIC and the City Council Mayors and between the City Council Mayors and the Municipal Council Mayors. The issue of the provision of adequate human, financial and infrastructural resources for the Municipal Council Executive and the Regional Executive Council to execute their responsibilities and duties was left unresolved.

This included, for example, the organisation and operation of government nursery and primary schools and local health units by municipal councils; and, government secondary schools by the Regional Assembly. The likelihood of conflicts between the Ministry of Territorial Administration and the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Government was enormous. The elected City Council Mayors and Municipal Council Mayors operated and functioned under the control of Governors and SDOs whereas City Councils and Municipal Councils had the Ministry of Decentralization and

Local Government as their supervisory Ministry and not the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

The appointments and transfers of teachers and personnel, for instance, in government nursery and primary schools and government health units/centres were done by the Minister of Basic Education and the Minister of Public Health in Yaounde respectively. In like manner, teachers and personnel in government secondary schools were appointed and transferred by the Minister of Secondary Education in Yaounde. The creation and operation of government-owned primary and secondary educational institutions, for instance, were still dictated and controlled from Yaounde; so also were health centres/units and hospitals. In addition to the above-mentioned lapses, to put it mildly, there was no difference, in substance, in the attributes and subjects between the Regional Assembly in the two Anglophone regions and the Regional Council in each of the other eight Francophone regions. The separation of the elected divisional representatives from the fons and chiefs by creating two houses (a House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs) in the SS was largely cosmetics.

In a similar way, the creation of a PIC in each of the two Anglophone regions did not add an iota in addressing the “high aspirations” of the people in the North West and South West Regions. Finally, the Governors, the SDOs and the PICs who were appointed by the President of the Republic to each of the two Anglophone regions were paid by the national/central government. There was no doubt that “he who pays the piper calls the tune.” The extensive devolution of administrative/political, juridical, educational and financial powers to the two English-speaking regions with their Anglo-Saxon sub-system of education and Common Law practices as demanded by Anglophones did not materialize. The President of the Republic retained his extensive and overwhelming powers.

However, it was argued that “The Special Status [SS] is ... an intentional mechanism that reinforces National Unity and cohesion by recognizing the specificities of... [the North West and South West] Regions.”¹⁸ According to the proponents of this view, the SS borrowed from both the centralized and decentralized systems. It was expected that any “touch” on the English-speaking sub-system of education would have inputs from the appropriate bodies in the North West and South West Regions. This also applied to judicial policies and decisions relating to Common Law practices. Furthermore, development locomotives such as the South West Development Authority (SOWEDA), the *Mission de Développement du Nord-Ouest* (MIDENO) and the Wum Area Development Authority (WADA) could be created by SS Regions. These regions were

18 Director-General of NASLA, “Presentation to the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Committee on the Follow-up of the Implementation of the Major National Dialogue,” 22 September 2021, Buea.

allowed to source for financial resources and invest in socio-economic development projects and re-inject the self-reliant development policy. The self-reliant policy was predominant and successful in West Cameroon before the abrogation of federalism in 1972.

As a special concession to the North West and South West Regions, elected officials who fell short of what was expected of them could be impeached, unlike in the other eight regions where provisions were not made for the impeachment of corrupt and /or incompetent elected officials. The SS did not attract immediate overwhelming support from the Anglophone population because most of them expected its immediate implementation; they failed or refused to realize that the 2021 state budget was adopted before the law which created the SS. The government explained that the appropriate financial resources would be provided for in the 2022 state budget. It should be emphasized, however, that the Special Status was not a creation of the Major National Dialogue. It was provided for in the 1996 constitution and the MND merely recommended its implementation; a recommendation which was accepted and its implementation set in motion.

The crisis, nonetheless, continued unabated with assassinations and abductions of Anglophones; the destruction of their economic structures and businesses; and, the collapse of their social fabric. The outbreak of the Corona virus (COVID-19) Pandemic in March 2019 compounded the sufferings of the population and added to the misery of the population of the North West and South West Regions as it did in the other eight regions. Meanwhile, in April 2020, and in continuation with the implementation of the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue, President Biya created the Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the North West and South West Regions (PPRD-NW/SW). Before the creation of the PPRD-NW/SW, the Head of State had instructed that a Special Fund of 2 billion Frs. CFA be set up for private secular and religious schools in the North West and South West Regions for the 2020 financial year.

Government Set-up the PPRD-NW/SW

The Anglophone crisis led to immense socio-economic destruction in the North West and South West Regions with devastating humanitarian consequences: thousands of lives were lost; large and small businesses collapsed; infrastructures were destroyed; and, various forms of developmental projects were abandoned. In April 2020, President Biya, in addressing one of the recommendations of the MND, established the Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the North-West and South-West Regions (PPRD-NW/SW). President Biya appointed Paul Tasong and Donatus Njong

as National Coordinator and Deputy National Coordinator respectively for the PPRD-NW/SW.

The goal of the PPRD-NW/SW was to implement “projects with prime focus in the rehabilitation and development of basic infrastructures, economic revitalization and the promotion of social cohesion.”¹⁹ The PPRD-NW/SW was, therefore, tasked with the socio-economic rehabilitation of the North West and South West Regions. The PPRD-NW/SW was one of the recommendations from the Major National Dialogue and its coordination was entrusted to indigenes of the North West and South West Regions. The PPRD-NW/SW was to be implemented in phases. The First Phase focused on promoting social cohesion and the construction of about 12,000 houses for those whose homes were burnt down. This Phase was estimated to cost eighty billion Frs. CFA; the total cost of the programme was 3,000 billion Frs. CFA.

The programmed projects were estimated to take 10 years for their completion. In June-July 2020, the National Coordinator and the Deputy of PPRD-NW/SW held a series of meetings in Bamenda and Buea on an awareness and sensitization campaign. Unfortunately and regrettably, the task of the PPRD-NW/SW failed to bear fruits because it was carried out when peace and political sanity were still a far cry in the two regions; and, no reconstruction and rehabilitation was achieved in the midst of the armed conflict although the reconstruction and development programme *per se* was well received by the vast majority of the population of the two regions. In spite of the absence of signs indicating the commencement of the execution of any reconstruction or rehabilitation project, the population of the South West Region issued “The Buea Declaration” in mid 2020 and promised their “unflinching support behind the Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the NW/SW regions.”

The population, through “The Buea Declaration,” commended “the magnanimity and accommodative disposition of Tasong and his team” and resolved, amongst others, to:

1. Ensure the restoration of social cohesion;
2. Promote the strengthening of cultural and social values to make life once more livable;
3. Revive human dignity;
5. Reinforce the revamping of organizations such as CDC, PAMOL, and SONARA;
6. Revitalize economic and social activities; and,
8. Ensure that reconstruction takes off at the same time in all the six divisions of the South West Region.²⁰

19 *The Post*, No. 02085, Wednesday, 06 April 2020, 3; *The Herald Tribune*, No. 053, Monday, 06 April 2020, 7; and, *The Guardian Post*, No. 1861, Monday, 06 April 2020, 3.

20 “The Buea Declaration,” 3rd Day of July 2020, Buea.

It was interesting that most of the resolutions gave the impression that the population of the South West Region was responsible for the problems which the region faced and was also responsible for the absence of peace and security in the region. This was because they “unanimously resolved” as if they had the ability, force and authority to enforce their resolutions (for instance Resolutions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8). They were not able to ensure peace and security in hotspots such as Munyenge, Muyuka and Ekona in Fako Division; Ediki and Kumba in Meme Division; and, in the Lebialem Division since 2018.

Yet, in Point 8, they resolved to “Ensure that reconstruction takes off at the same time in all the six divisions of the South West Region.” The reality of the impossibility of implementing Point 8 of “The Buea Declaration” was evident when Tasong tried to downplay the hostile reception his delegation received. In effect, he explained that although his presence and his team “in the two regions was welcomed by the lockdowns and gunshots, it did not send any message of intent across because... the gunshots fired by the separatist fighters were just to impress their sponsors.” He added that “whether there are gunshots or no gunshots, we [the government] are going to embark on our reconstruction plan. But the ideal thing will be for us to begin work in peace.”²¹ The decision by the government to insist on the implementation of the PPRD-NW/SW regardless of the fact that the socio-political climate was not serene was a classic example of putting the cart before the horse.

On 10 July 2020, the Sako IG issued a statement rejecting the PPRD-NW/SW and a *Press Release* signed by Samuel Sako stated:

- A. All activities of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the pretext of accompanying the Cameroon government in the reconstruction of NW and SW Regions are hereby banned;
- B. All other local and international organizations, independent contractors and their affiliates who sign contracts or do any work in the NW and SW Region[s] in the project of reconstruction are equally banned; and, the Interim Government of Ambazonia will target all UN facilities on ground zero, since the UN has refused to side with us, they have instead sided with Cameroon so they must be targeted.²²

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) took Sako’s threat seriously. On 14 July 2020, the Head of the OCHA in the North West and South West

21 *Eden*, No. 1167, Monday, 06 July 2020, 2.

22 Samuel I. Sako, President of British Cameroons Federal Republic of Ambazonia, *Tress Release*, 10 July 2020, Buea (Washington, D.C).

Regions explained that the activities of humanitarian NGOs and UN humanitarian agencies were not linked to the PPRD-NW/SW. He appealed that the workers of NGOs and UN humanitarian agencies should not be targeted. There was no denying that the insecurity in both regions seriously hampered the government's reconstruction and development agenda for the North West and South West Regions.

On 18 May 2021, Prime Minister Dion Ngute; the President of the North West Regional Council, Prof. Fru Angwafor; the President of the South West Regional Council, Zacheus Elango; and, Minister Paul Tasong who doubled as the President of the PPRD-NW/SW, amongst others, met with the business class in Douala under the canopy of GICAM. The heated discussions which followed centred on the reconstruction of the North West and South West Regions. Whereas the government demanded financial support from the business class in the reconstruction of the two Anglophone regions, the latter decried the absence of transparency and accountability in the management of funds put at the disposal of the government; the failure of the government in harnessing the estimated 80 billion Frs. CFA for the first phase; and, also complained that the ability of the government to harness the total amount of 3,000 billion Frs. CFA for the ten-year plan was in the air.

Furthermore, the business class wondered how, in the midst of insecurity occasioned by Amba fighters and armed bandits, investment and reconstruction could take place in insecure areas. It was, therefore, obvious that no meaningful reconstruction and development could take place in the midst of the crisis. Nonetheless, at the end of the discussions, GICAM promised to support the Government's Reconstruction Plan for the North West and South West Regions with the sum of 1.2 billion Frs. CFA.²³ The government, in executing some minimal aspects of the Reconstruction Plan in certain secured areas, held secret "Talks" with some Ambazonian leaders.

Secret "Talks" and COVID-19

The Cameroon government regarded the Anglophone Crisis as an internal matter and did not want it to be internationalized contrary to what countries like the US propounded. The appeal for foreign involvement in the search for a solution to the crisis increased as the sufferings, deaths, number of IDPs and the socio-economic destruction of the North West and South West Regions mounted. The government discretely, under the auspices of friendly bodies and countries, held "Talks" with some of the secessionist leaders.

²³ *Vision Economique*, No. 094 du Mardi, 25 Mai 2021, 1.

The “Talks” was made very difficult by the mistrust which the government, on the one hand, and the secessionist leaders and their financial backers, on the other, nursed against each other. In addition, it was an open secret that some secessionist leaders as well as some government officials and military officers who reaped huge sums of money from the crisis did not cherish an end to it.²⁴ In the government, two camps emerged: the hawks or hardliners who believed that a military option was the best and only solution; and, the doves who wanted a peaceful negotiation to end the crisis. The situation was further complicated and compounded by the disunity within the secessionist camp even as they insisted on secession as their goal.

In April 2019, the Interim Government (IG) organized a conference in Berlin, Germany, and called for consultations between the leadership in the diaspora and Sisiku Ayuk Tabe and his team (“Nera 10”) who were imprisoned in the Yaounde Kondengui Maximum Security Prison. But, unfortunately, the meeting was not fruitful. In June 2019, the disunity of the Ambazonia Interim Government emerged as two Interim Governments were created: the Interim Government of Sisiku (IG Sisiku) and the Interim Government of Sako (IG Sako). In 2019, the groups which supported the IG Sako formed the Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT) with Oliver Lekeaka, “Field Marshal”, of the Red Dragons of Lebialem as the rallying “jewel” on Ground Zero. The ACT also included SOCADEF led by Ebenezer Akwanga from the diaspora, Herbert Boh of the MoRISC and Elvis Kometa of the SCNC. The Sisiku IG was supported by the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGOVC) led by Ayaba Cho with the ADF as its military wing. It was in this context that the first of a series of substantive secret peace initiatives to end the armed conflict was carried out.

The Swiss Initiative, June 2019

In June 2019, the Swiss Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue supported by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs with US approval organized a secret meeting in Switzerland between a delegation of the Cameroon government and a delegation of secessionist leaders in the diaspora. In September 2019, the Swiss Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue organized another meeting in Montraux, Switzerland, before the 30 September-4 October 2019 MND.

In December 2019, the Secretary-General at the Presidency, Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, issued a communiqué which announced that the Cameroon government had ended its participation in the Swiss Peace Initiative. President Biya subsequently handed over the mandate to negotiate with the secessionists to Prime Minister Dion Ngute and Senior Superintendent of Police Leopold Maxime Eko Eko, the Director of External Research at the General Directorate for External Research.

²⁴ *The Guardian Post*, No. 1922, Wednesday, 08 July 2020, 1.

Yaounde “Talks” with Success Nkongho, December 2019-2020

In December 2019, two months after the Major National Dialogue, the Cameroon government initiated secret peace “Talks” with Success Nkongho.²⁵ Nkongho was in contact with a large group of Anglophone armed secessionists in Nigeria. On the invitation of the Yaounde government, Nkongho secretly sojourned in Yaounde from December 2019 until late 2020. He held a series of secret meetings with some government and non-government officials who handled the “Anglophone Conflict File.”

The government team comprised Prime Minister Dion Ngute; Constance Ebune who was the Director of the Prime Minister’s cabinet; Senior Superintendent of Police Eko Eko; Elie Smith of the unsuccessful Anglophone General Conference of Cardinal Tumi; and, Colonel Joel Emile Bamkouli, amongst others. The objectives of the meetings were:

- a) Get the hundreds of armed Anglophone secessionists in Nigeria to return to Cameroon;
- b) The armed secessionists should lay down their arms; and,
- c) The secessionists would be richly compensated in exchange of laying down their arms.²⁶

The ultimate goal of the government was to get “General” Nambere, who had de-camped from the secessionist group, back to “talking” with the government. Unfortunately, according to Nkongho, the Cameroon government was not sincere and those tasked with dialoguing with the secessionists did not want the conflict to end despite the fact that most of the secessionists in Nigeria were ready to return to Cameroon. Nkongho had, reportedly, convinced about 261 secessionists to return to Cameroon but the deal fell apart because those in the government team did not carry through with what they had promised.

The Anglophone conflict was a big and rewarding business to the secessionists and some government and military officials. Consequently, the discussions with Nkongho collapsed and he returned to Nigeria. In spite of public statements by the Cameroon government that France was not a party in the search for a peaceful solution to the crisis, Nkongho met with the French Ambassador to Cameroon and the latter made promises which never materialized.²⁷

25 Success Nkongho was a prominent Amba frontline leader who took up residence in Nigeria. He was regarded as a sell-out by some Anglophones who supported the secessionist cause. It was reported that he was on the government pay roll.

26 <https://youtu.be/QOOeQJIWQtI> (accessed, 2 May 2022).

27 Ibid.

Secret Missions to Ghana and the USA, February 2020

In February 2020, Eko Eko held a secret meeting in Accra, Ghana, with some secessionist leaders because it was believed that the secessionists in the diaspora held the key to a successful resolution to the crisis. Eko Eko met with Akwanga and some secessionist “Generals”. At the end of the meeting, Akwanga and the “Generals” left richer but the armed conflict continued. In pursuit of the path towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict, Colonel Joel Emile Bamkoui travelled to the USA to broker a deal with the secessionists but his trip did not also bear fruits. The outbreak of Covid-19 hit Cameroon in March 2020 and the worldwide efforts to eradicate the corona virus pandemic let the UN to call for a cessation of hostilities on humanitarian grounds to enable health/medical workers to treat affected patients, contain the pandemic and eventually eradicate it.

In the midst of the agonizing Anglophone Crisis, the Corona virus Pandemic (COVID-19) hit the world and Cameroon was not exempted. In March 2020, the UN Secretary-General launched an appeal for a global ceasefire of conflicts and hostilities in conflict-hit countries. On 1st July 2020, the UN Security Council endorsed the appeal of March 2020 from the UN Secretary-General. The UN Security Council (UNSC) endorsement was contained in UNSC Resolution 2532. The main points were:

- i. A demand for a cessation of hostilities;
- ii. An appeal for an immediate 90-day pause to allow for humanitarian activities; and,
- iii. A plea for intensified international cooperation to tackle the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Unfortunately, the appeal from the UN Secretary-General and UNSC Resolution 2532 were not respected by the separatists on the ground in spite of the support the appeal and the resolution received from most separatist front line leaders in the diaspora. For instance, the separatists in Kumba in Meme Division gunned down a humanitarian health worker shortly after the UNSC Resolution was adopted. The health worker was suspected of collaborating with government forces.²⁸ The assassination was condemned by Doctors Without Borders and the South West-North West Women Taskforce (SNWOT).

In order to address the COVID-19 Pandemic, the government imposed a certain number of measures in line with the World Health Organization (WHO)

28 The term “collaborate” was generally used by separatist fighters to justify the physical elimination of an opponent even when it was to settle scores which were not related, directly or indirectly, to the “fight for independence.”

recommendations. The appeal from the UN Secretary-General and UNSC Resolution 2532 was, nonetheless, supported by the ADF. On 7 July 2020, the ADF agreed to allow safe passage for humanitarian aid workers, and coupled with the appeal from the UN Secretary-General and UNSC Resolution 2532, a conducive atmosphere was created for a meeting (“Talks”) between the government and Sisiku Ayuk Tabe on 2 July 2020.

July 2020 “Talks”

The 2 July 2020 “Talks” was intended to be kept secret because it was regarded as “pre-talks” or “exploratory talks” to prepare for a “Substantive Talks.” But the Ayuk Tabe team leaked the “Talks” to the public through social media and the press. The government delegation was led by Senior Superintendent of Police Leopold Maxime Eko Eko and five officials from the Directorate of External Research while Ayuk Tabe led a nine-man delegation.²⁹ Nfor Ngala Nfor, one of the “Nera 10”, addressed one of the criticisms leveled against holding the “Talks” by Tassang. Nfor Ngala Nfor explained that the meeting was not for all of the “Nera 10” but rather that Ayuk Tabe led a delegation. Nfor Ngala Nfor, who supported the “Talks,” opined that the “Talks” was “an exploration or consultation between two contending parties for the eventual meeting before a mediator” and that it fell within normal secret negotiations.³⁰

At the meeting, Ayuk Tabe presented three main conditions for the start of any meaningful discussions or negotiations. These were:

1. Declaration of a ceasefire by the government and the return of the military to the barracks but the military were allowed to effect military operations;
2. Unconditional release of all Ambazonians detained and/or imprisoned as a result of the Anglophone Crisis; a piece-meal liberation of the Ambazonians was accepted by Ayuk Tabe on condition that they, Ayuk Tabe and his “team”, would be the last to be set free; and,
3. General amnesty to the Ambazonians in the diaspora.³¹

29 The Ambazonia delegation comprised Ayuk Tabe, Shufai Blaise Berinyuy, Augustine Awasum, Elias Eyambe, Penn Terence, Mancho Bibixy, Tsi Conrad, Fritz Takang and Richard Ngome. Tassang was invited but he turned down the invitation. See *The Sun*, No. 0607, Monday, 06 July 2020, 2; *Eden*, No. 1167, Monday, 06 July 2020, 8; and, *The Media* No. 394, Monday, 6 July 2020, 3. The Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Yaounde, His Grace Jean Mbarga, provided the neutral meeting hall.

30 Nfor N. Nfor, “A solemn Patriotic Call for a win-win for Ambazonia,” 4 July 2020, Yaounde.

31 *The Median*, No. 394, Monday, 6 July 2020, 3; *The Sun*, No. 0607, Monday, 06 July 2020, 2.

Reactions to the July 2020 “Talks”

The “Talks” was well received by the Anglophone community and a reasonable proportion of Ambazonians. In his statement, Ayuk Tabe dampened expectations as he reiterated that he remained committed to the restoration of the independence of Southern Cameroons. The “Talks” was endorsed by the Ambazonia Governing Council of Ayaba Cho and the Southern Cameroons Civil Society Consortium of John Mbah Akuroh as “the first step towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.”³²

The Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia Community in South Africa stood “solidly in support of our President, Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe and the entire Ambazonia Leadership in articulating these legitimate demands....” They also called on all Ambazonian groups “to work in synergy towards any decision leading to a ceasefire.”³³ Former Supreme Court Judge Paul Ayah Abine called the “Talks” a “step in the right direction”; Agbor Balla “saluted the bravery and laudable initiative by the government and Ayuk Tabe and Co;” Mark Bareta welcomed it and praised Ayuk Tabe “for his openness and clairvoyance”; and, Eric Tataw warned that “any persons who do not rally with Sisiku... will only have themselves to blame.”³⁴ Christian Cardinal Tumi who worked tirelessly for a resolution of the crisis also gave his support to the 2 July Talks.

On the extreme end of the spectrum, however, the IG Sako criticized Ayuk Tabe’s action and said that “Sisiku is still in jail and prisoners do not negotiate for free people.” Sako further insisted that he was the only rightful person to speak on behalf of Ambazonia and dismissed the “Talks” as null and void.³⁵ Chris Anu also dismissed the “Talks” and opined that the delegation was not mandated to discuss modalities for peace. Barrister Ayah Paul Abine seemed to have anticipated the question of “mandated authority” when he intimated that Southern Cameroons comprised “those on the territory and those abroad.”

According to him, those in the diaspora claimed “some exclusive rights with an absolutely HOLLOW foundation” and opined that those in the diaspora were not mandated by Anglophones.³⁶ In a similar vein, he stated that nobody gave anybody in the North West and South West Regions the mandate to speak on behalf of the population of these two

32 *The Sun*, No. 0607, Monday, 06 July 2020, 2.

33 Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia Community, “Ambazonia Community in South Africa Endorse the ceasefire Talks between the government of La République du Cameroon and Ambazonia Leaders led by President, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe,” 7th July 2020, Johannesburg, South Africa.

34 *The Media*, No. 394, Monday, 6 July 2020, 3.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Ayah Paul, “Taking for Granted,” 4 July 2020.

regions.³⁷ Tassang, on his part, dismissed the “Talks” and argued that “only free men, suffering no inhibitions, should negotiate for freedom.”³⁸ Sako and Tassang apparently failed to know the role Nelson Mandela played in dismantling the obnoxious apartheid system in South Africa while he was in jail.

On 6 July 2020, the Cameroon government confirmed that the “Talks” was held but poured cold water on the excitement when it explained that “the information disseminated on social media about the holding on 2 July 2020 of negotiations between a government delegation and secessionists awaiting trial is not consistent with reality.” It went on to reaffirm “its readiness to seek peaceful solutions to the crisis... particularly through dialogue.” It further stated that the government was opened to “various contacts, initiatives and proposals to that end.”³⁹ The government communiqué was baffling, to say the least. Either the government was confused or it believed that Cameroonians had very short memory.

All the nine members of the delegation led by Sisiku Ayuk Tabe were not “secessionists awaiting trial” because all of them had been tried in a military court and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. They were tried and sentenced to imprisonment after the Appeal Court, in September 2020, rejected their appeal and re-affirmed the terms of imprisonment which were meted on them. The failure or suspension of the July 2020 “Talks” did not, however, indicate that peace initiatives were abandoned. The government and the friends of Cameroon intensified calls for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through an all-inclusive dialogue while respecting the territorial integrity of the country; an example of such invitations for an all-inclusive dialogue came from the US Senate.

US Senate Draft Resolution, September 2020

In the US, during the 116th Congress, the Senate drafted a resolution on 7 September 2020 which called for a non-violent resolution of the crisis and condemned the abuses committed by both the national defence and security forces and the armed separatists in the two regions. The resolution also called for a “genuinely inclusive dialogue.” The draft Senate Resolution urged “all parties to the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon... to conclude and uphold an immediate ceasefire” and to “initiate a credible, inclusive, good-faith effort to end the armed conflict... by addressing the root causes of the crisis

37 Ibid.

38 Tassang, “Negotiating from Prison.”

39 René Emmanuel Sadi, Minister of Communication, “Government Communiqué, Yaoundé, 6 July 2020.

and grievances and seeking nonviolent solutions to resolve the conflict....”⁴⁰

The resolution expressed the importance of the full implementation of the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue. It also invited the armed separatist groups to “engage peacefully with government officials to express grievances and engage in nonviolent efforts to resolve the conflict.” Furthermore, it urged the international community to: “join in a strategic collective effort to pressure the government of Cameroon and separatist armed groups, including through the use of available diplomatic and punitive tools, to immediately conclude and uphold a ceasefire, [and] participate in an inclusive and meaningful dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict.”⁴¹

The draft resolution also invited the European Union (EU) to use its influence to “impose” an all-inclusive dialogue between the Cameroon government and the armed separatists. Interestingly, neither the USA nor the EU ever invited Spain, for instance, to dialogue with the Catalanian separatists; much less imposed or threatened to impose sanctions on the Spanish government and/or on the Catalanian separatists. The draft further invited France, because of its neocolonial ties with the Cameroon government, to exert pressure on the government for an all-inclusive dialogue. The Ambazonians, their sympathizers and supporters did not conceal their excitement and approval of the non-binding Senate resolution. They looked forward to increasing US sanctions against the Cameroon government and especially on some individual Cameroonians.

Unfortunately for the Ambazonians, on 9 October 2020, the US Embassy in Yaounde issued a *Press Release* which threw the Ambazonians under the bus; they were left in the lurch, so to speak. In the *Press Release*, the Embassy unequivocally stated:

The U.S. Embassy categorically denies the assertions in recent fake news claiming that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations... recently announced alleged U.S. interventions regarding a supposed military intervention in Cameroon. *The United States has no such interest or intention.... Similarly... neither the U.S. Senate nor the full U.S. Congress have held debate on, or taken any action to approve, any U.S. intervention in Cameroon.... [The] non-binding resolution on September 7 [2020] ... did not call for intervention....* With respect to the Anglophone crisis, [the U.S calls] on both sides to the conflict in the Northwest and Southwest to abjure further violence and to enter into an open-ended dialogue without

40 US 116th Congress, 2D Session, S. RES., September 2020.

41 Ibid.

pre-conditions [Emphasis added].⁴²

The US Senate Draft Resolution, nonetheless, raised several questions which appeared to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the US foreign policy establishment and the neo-colonial impulse of the US in championing democracy and the respect of human rights.⁴³

The invitation by the US Senate “to enter into an open-ended dialogue without pre-conditions” was made in spite of the despicable misery and untold sufferings caused by foreign, covert and at times overt, interventions in some African countries in the name of addressing human rights violations. Of course, there were gross human rights violations by both parties in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon which could not be denied. Similarly, there were gross human rights violations in countries such as Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and South Sudan. But, without a better understanding of the root causes of the crises in these countries, a comprehensive peaceful solution could not be ascertained.⁴⁴ The US Senate draft resolution fell on deaf ears: the armed secessionist fighters held on tenaciously to their position on “independence”; and, the Cameroon government dismissed the secessionist position as a non-starter to any meaningful dialogue.

It should, however, be understood that the US Senate draft resolution talked of “inclusive

42 U.S. Embassy, “U.S. Has No Interest in Cameroon,” *Press Release*, Friday, October 9, 2020, Yaounde, Cameroon; *Eden*, “US Embassy Refutes Intervention In Cameroon,” No. 1179, Monday, 12 October 2020, 8.

43 It should be noted that the US intervenes in the internal affairs of countries especially when it is in the economic and geo-strategic interest of the US. The covert and overt US policy outlaws and crushes separatist tendencies, legal or illegal, which threaten the unity and territorial integrity of the US. The American civil war of April 1861-April 1865 was a compelling example. The US government did not dialogue or negotiate with the “Confederate Government.” The US government rejects dialogue and negotiation with terrorists as a policy. But, in the case of the crisis in Cameroon which degenerated into an armed conflict, the US provided haven for the frontline Ambazonian leaders who, through hate speeches and videos, promoted and financed the armed secessionists. It should be underscored that the US adopted a decidedly anti-colonial policy before, during, and after World War II.

44 The author has benefitted from the analysis of Samuel Dongmo in “Geopolitics at Play in Imperfect Arenas: US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Introduced Resolution on Cameroon with Dictation of Sanction” in *African Union Citizen Journal*, africanservices@aol.com, 18 September 2020. The socio-political history of Cameroon, especially that of the North West and South West Regions (former Southern Cameroons/West Cameroon), is very complex and it is compounded by deep-rooted concealed cultural and socio-political fissures between the ethnic groups and regions. A wrong comprehension of the history of the people definitely leads to a wrong assessment of the causes of the socio-political crisis in the two regions and, by extension, the adoption of solutions and/or resolutions which do not address the cause(s) of the crisis.

dialogue” and not “inclusive negotiation” and the *Press Release* from the Embassy talked of an “open-ended dialogue.” Meanwhile, Amba fighters and secessionist frontline leaders in the diaspora realized, after four years of insisting on school boycott, that Cameroonians and the international community refused to succumb to educational blackmail. In order to drive home the determination of the youth of the South West Region to voice their worry on the deteriorating socio-economic development of their region in the midst of the armed conflict, a Southwest Youth League was founded in November 2020 with its headquarters in Buea.

Southwest Youth League (SWYL)

The mission of the SWYL was to “guide the youth of the region for greater sustainable development.”⁴⁵ The objectives of the SWYL were, amongst others: the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region; and, fostering the “inclusiveness of the South West youth in regional and national political determination.”⁴⁶ The SWYL organised a conference in Buea in May 2022. Its discussion centred on the economic development of the South West Region and the need for peace in the region. It also condemned and rejected the call for the independence of the two regions as well as the wave of assassinations, abductions and destruction that were perpetuated in the region. The government, in spite of the position of the secessionists who insisted on the independence of the two Anglophone regions, continued the search for a solution to the crisis as meetings were held secretly in-and-out of Cameroon. One of such meetings was “The Toronto Retreat.”

Toronto Retreat, 30th October 2021-1st November 2021

The Cameroon government was not ready to negotiate or dialogue on the unity and territorial integrity of the country while some extremists in the secessionist camp wanted nothing except the “Absolute Independence” of the North West and South West Regions. Although the armed secessionists multiplied their atrocities with the use of IEDs and abductions, the response from the military indicated that dialogue was the best means to resolve the conflict. Some secessionist leaders, concerned stakeholders and civil society NGOs, Ambazonian activists and some religious leaders (the PCC Moderator Rt. Rev. Samuel Fonki and Archbishop Emeritus Cornelius Esua, for example) agreed to meet in Toronto, Canada, in an endeavour to work-out a path towards a resolution of the crisis. The Toronto Retreat (Meeting) was supported by the Swiss Humanitarian NGO, the British and Canadian governments. The participants

45 Southwest Youth League, “All South West Youth Conference,” 7 May 2022.

46 Ibid.

met in Toronto from 30th October to 1st November 2021. The meeting was organised by the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations (CDN).

The harsh and unpleasant reality which Anglophone secessionists and activists were confronted with was succinctly captured by John Mbah Akuroh, one of the frontline Ambazonian leaders in the diaspora, in the following words: “We are trying everything to bring LRC [*La République du Cameroun*] to the table because we cannot win the war. Let us be honest. LRC [*La République du Cameroun*] does not care what we do in Swiss or Canada.”⁴⁷ The meeting brought together federalists, unionists and secessionists. The overriding goal was for the various voices to arrive at a consensus before dialoguing with the Cameroon government. This was of paramount importance given the internal infighting within the various secessionist groups as well as within the federalist group.

The armed groups were: Ikome Sako/Chris Anu Group which controlled, amongst others, the Lebialem Red Dragons, Bui Restoration Forces, Bui Warriors, Bali Buffalos and the Ngoketunjia Restoration Forces; the Chu Ayaba Group which controlled the Ambazonia Defence Forces; and, the Akwanga Group which operated mainly in Fako Division. The meeting was, according to Dabney Yerima who was the Vice-President of Ayuk Tabe’s Interim Government, to address the following points: Define the Problem; Build bridges; Encourage team work; Provide for internal dialogue and trust-building; and, Adopt Principles for Negotiations. The Cameroon government was not a party to the Toronto Retreat. The position of Dabney Yerima that the North West and South West Regions wanted “Absolute Independence” meant that his position was dead on arrival.

The Retreat ended with empty resolutions and while it did not endorse the Swiss Initiative, it felt that it should be a multi-mediation purpose. The Toronto Meeting did not also resolve any of the points mentioned above. Meanwhile, the increasing participation of pupils and students in attending classes in schools and colleges in urban centres and towns in the North West and South West Regions and the resolve of an increasing number of parents to ensure that schools, colleges and higher institutions operated led some secessionist leaders to promote calls for classes to operate unmolested. The secessionists also understood that the imposition of school boycott tarnished the image of their “struggle for independence.”

47 John Mbah Akuroh, “To Boh Herbert Regarding the Swiss Facilitation,” The Consortium, November 2021.

Call-off of School Boycott

The destructive effects of the imposition of school boycott in the North West and South West Regions finally dawned on the armed secessionists that it was counterproductive to Anglophone parents and children and to the general literacy rate in the two regions. This was especially so because most parents who had the financial means registered their children in Anglo-Saxon-styled schools and colleges which sprouted like mushrooms in the other eight regions especially in the Centre, Littoral, West and South Regions or sent them to foreign countries. In addition, Anglophones in the diaspora who championed the school boycott ensured that their children and/or family members had quality Anglo-Saxon-styled education in any of the eight other regions in Cameroon or in foreign countries. Some of the Amba fighters realized the hypocrisy of Anglophones in the diaspora who supported and financed the imposition of school boycott in the two Anglophone regions while ensuring that their children and family members attended school abroad or in any of the other eight regions.

In September 2020, Amba fighters decided to encourage the effective resumption of school and classes in a communiqué released by the Restoration Fighters. It did not need the armed secessionist Amba fighters almost four years of assassinating/abducting Anglophone teachers at all levels of education; the assassination and abduction of Anglophone pupils/students; and, the destruction of socio-educational infrastructures in the two regions for them and their sponsors in-and-out of Cameroon to realize that education was the gateway to the economic, social, cultural and political development of any society. The fighters explained that they could not “leave our children to grow up as illiterates or migrating from country to country in search of education.” Some Amba fighters explicitly stated that: “If our children do not go to school, they will not know how to read and write even our history tomorrow or be in a wealthy career.”⁴⁸

The Restoration fighters listed the following conditions which were expected to be “strictly” observed for the resumption of classes:

1. Respecting all ghost town days especially Mondays;
2. No wearing of school uniforms;
3. No singing of La Republic [sic] National Anthem and hoisting of their flag;
4. No learning of French and the history of La Republic du Cameroon [sic];

48 “Communiqué for Back to Schools 2020/2021;”

5. The teaching of mother tongue and religious knowledge should be encouraged in all schools; and,
6. All community, mission and lay private schools should protect children from COVID-19 Pandemic.⁴⁹

Although this was a laudable step in the right direction as Amba fighters and their mentors realized the foolhardiness of their decision to impose a school boycott in the North West and South West Regions in the first place, most of their conditions exposed the degree of their thought-process.

For instance, who was expected to absorb the hundreds of thousands of children in the two regions who attended government schools given that they “decreed” community schools should exist and not government schools? In addition, what was expected of the hundreds of Anglophone teachers who taught French in the two regions in schools at various levels? Furthermore, who was to be responsible for the provision of pedagogic materials and salaries to the teachers and other staff in the “Community Schools”? Finally, the wearing of school uniforms was the pride and symbol of Anglo-Saxon education but Amba fighters ruled it as being unacceptable. The absence of a central command structure within the so-called Federal Republic of Ambazonia was, once more, vividly driven home on 25 September 2020. In a *PressRelease*, the Department of Self-Defense and Security of the self-styled Republic of Ambazonia explained that the Ambazonia Restoration Forces (ARF) did not authorize the resumption of schools in the North West and South West Regions.⁵⁰

In a swift reaction to the rejection of school resumption by the ARF, the main frontline secessionist leaders in the diaspora and Sisiku Ayuk Tabe in the Kondengui Central Prison in Yaounde tweeted their support for the resumption of schools for the 2020/2021 academic year. Mark Bareta tweeted that “schools boycott is no longer a weapon of our struggle for independence... [and] Ambazonian Forces should allow education and even encourage schools going.” Eric Tataw categorically stated that “Ambazonia has lost; [school boycott] has been a strategy that has backfired on us.” The strongest endorsement for the resumption of classes came from Ayuk Tabe who, from his cell in the Kondengui Central Prison, said: “As a people we cannot sacrifice the future of our children.

49 Ibid.

50 Department of Self-Defense and Security, The Federal Republic of Ambazonia, “ARF Ground Zero Command has not authorized the Reopening of Schools,” Ref: DSS/SCH/25092020, 25 September 2020.

We must... protect our people especially our children as they return to school come October 5th 2020.”⁵¹

The majority of the leading secessionists sided with the vast proportion of the population of the North West and South West Regions in rejecting the weapon of school boycott. It should be underscored that after four years of imposition of school boycott, its effectiveness had waned considerably and the secessionists were forced to jump into the moving train. But the apparent calm was shattered on 24 October 2020 in Kumba when Amba Fighters attacked students of Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy and killed six students and wounded 13; similar attacks occurred at Kulu Memorial College on 4 November 2020 as discussed in chapter five. The resurgence of senseless attacks, abduction and murder of school children were condemned in very strong terms but the frontline Ambazonian leaders who lived in the USA, Europe and South Africa and financed, directed and coordinated the attacks went about their activities in their comfort zones unperturbed. Most of the condemnations were empty words which did not disturb these sponsors.

For instance, on 6 November 2020, the US State Department issued a *Press Statement* which emphasized the US government's support for the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon but mentioned no steps to contain the secessionist leaders who fanned and sponsored the atrocities from the US. The *Statement* by the State Department read, in part:

[The US Government] counts on the Cameroonian diaspora in the United States to participate constructively in addressing its concerns about Cameroon. *We will not work with groups... that include calls for violence or hate speech.* The United States supports the territorial integrity of Cameroon and calls for all actors to peacefully address the long-term grievances driving the current conflict in the Northwest and Southwest Regions and to cease exacerbating the hardship experienced by civilians in these regions [Emphasis added].⁵²

The State Department opined that the US government would not “work with groups... that include calls for violence and hate speech;” but, it was nothing short of laughable.

It was open knowledge that the frontline secessionist leaders in the US were known to be directly responsible for the heinous assassinations of civilian Anglophones and members of the national defence and security forces. Audios and videos of particularly despicable

51 *The Guardian Post*, “Key Diaspora Ambazonia Leaders back effective School Resumption NW, SW,” No. 1980, Wednesday, 30 September 2020, 1, 3.

52 <https://www.state> (accessed 7 November 2020).

hate speeches poured out from the US and the US government knew the sources and those responsible for them, but decided to turn a blind eye and gave a deaf ear to the cries of innocent Cameroonians caught in the melee. The contents of the audios and videos would not have been accepted if they were directed against the US government and/or its citizens, the First Amendment of the US Constitution notwithstanding. It was within this environment that a letter by some US Congressmen to US President Joe Biden in February 2021 relating to the repatriation of some Cameroonians in the US drew sharp reaction from some Cameroonian Parliamentarians.

US Congressmen and Cameroonian MPs Exchanged Words

It was an open secret that the Cameroonian government was uneasy with the American tolerance of Cameroonians who resided in the US; financed and promoted violence and terrorism in the North West and South West Regions in the name of fighting for the independence of the people of the two regions. The US and Cameroonian governments discussed, through diplomatic channels, the subject of Cameroonian separatists in the US who financed and fanned the crisis in the two regions of Cameroon. However, when some Members of the US Congress raised the issue of the Anglophone crisis in a letter to President Biden in February 2021, Cameroonian Parliamentarians seized the opportunity to condemn, in a subtle but acidic manner, the US stance vis-à-vis the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon.

It all began when about 40 Democratic Members of the US Congress sent a letter dated 17 February 2021 to President Biden. In the letter, they requested for a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to some Cameroonians who were earmarked for eviction from the US and deportation to Cameroon. The US Congressmen opined that the said Cameroonians should be afforded the protection of TPS or DED because of the war that ravaged the North West and South West Regions and because the “conditions [occasioned by the crisis] in Cameroon continue to worsen as violence continues and the pandemic continues to take its public health and economic toll....”⁵³

The letter drew swift and acerbic response from 62 Cameroonian MPs in a letter dated 22 February 2021. In their response, the Cameroonian MPs decried “the falsehood, distorted opinion, and the extremely negative characterization of our country [Cameroon] by the Members of the United States Congress....”⁵⁴ The Cameroonian

53 Joshua N. Osih, *Press Release*, 25 February 2021, Yaounde.

54 Members of the Cameroon House of Assembly, “To the Members of the United States Signatories of the Correspondence of 17th February 2020 to the President of the United States Requesting

MPS considered the remark “as most unfriendly, derogatory and smacks of an attempt to tarnish” the image of Cameroon. The MPs also condemned “such deep misunderstanding [of the situation in Cameroon] despite the views of the United States Embassy in Yaounde....”⁵⁵

In conclusion, the Cameroonian MPs stated:

We urge the United States Congressmen to be more vigorously engaged in ensuring the respect of International Conventions against transnational crime and criminality to which the United States is signatory and to *ensure that their country is not a refuge for criminal perpetrators and financiers of acts of extreme violence and terrorism on the people of Cameroon* [Emphasis added].⁵⁶

The letter by the US Congressmen and the reply from Cameroonian MPs split the opposition parties in Cameroon as the SDF experienced internal ranking on why the MPs responded while Maurice Kamto of the CRM condemned the action of the Cameroonian MPs. But the most “poisonous” division within a major opposition political party came from the SDF. The CPDM watched gleefully as the SDF stewed in its own juice.

In a strongly worded condemnation, SDF Parliamentarian Jean Michel Nintcheu stated in a *Press Statement* dated 25 February 2021 that some Cameroonian Parliamentarians “only seem to bother about their personal, egoistic and egocentric interests at the expense of the people of the North West and South West.”⁵⁷ He added:

I am shocked that those who have always opposed the discussion of the [Anglophone] conflict in parliament should sign such a letter.... This pious and caricatured petition initiated and signed by proponents of the use of force is a catalogue of vain slogans given the context of the [Anglophone] crisis.... If Cameroonians who have been forced into the world because [of] their political opinions are soliciting protection from their host country government, let them have it. The bad treatment and ferocious repression they face [in Cameroon]... are the cause [for their fleeing from their

TPS and DED for Cameroonians,” 22 February 2021, National Assembly, Yaounde, Cameroon. For the names and signatures of the Cameroonian MPs who signed the letter, see *The Sun*, No. 0639, Wednesday, 03 March 2021, 7-8.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Jean Michel Nintcheu, “Press Statement Following the Petition of Certain Cameroonian Parliamentarians Requesting the Extradition of Some Compatriots From the USA,” 25 February 2021, Douala, Cameroon.

country].⁵⁸

Joshua Osih, another SDF Parliamentarian, was criticized by some of his peers in the party as well as some non-SDF party members and militants for having approved of the letter. In the letter, which was made public, Joshua Osih's name was No. 2 and he signed it as a member of the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee.⁵⁹

On 25 February 2021, Osih issued a *Press Release* in which he took issues with those who criticized the Cameroonian MPs for reacting to the letter by the US Congressmen. Osih explained that "It was... within our remit, as representatives of the [Cameroonian] people to provide a weighted response and seek further methods through which to best engage with these concerned members of the American Congress."⁶⁰ He went on to ask some questions and provided answers which rattled the financiers and supporters of the armed conflict. Amongst other questions, Osih asked:

Should we be encouraging and celebrating more and more Cameroonians who are forced away from the responsibility of building this nation, the comfort of their homes in the hope of seeking asylum in the United States of America? Again, the resounding answer is NO! Does America provide safe harbor and anchor for the financiers, propagandists and sponsors of war? Resounding YES!

Have those who have been repatriated so far been subject to any severe treatment besides the psychological, physical and economic cost of their journey, which would have been all but avoided, had we the right government in place? Once again, a resounding NO!⁶¹

Neither the Cameroon House of Assembly nor the Senate ever debated the crisis in the North West and South West Regions. But, the Osih-Nintcheu public exchanges over the response by the Cameroonian MPs was a manifestation of the power struggle within the SDF on who should succeed Ni John Fru Ndi as the SDF Chairperson. This was at a time when Fru Ndi was very sick and he was in the UK for medical treatment.

58 Ibid.

59 See Members of the Cameroon House of Assembly, "To the Members of the United States Congress Signatories"; and, *The Sun*, No. 0639, 7.

60 Joshua N. Osih, *Press Release*, 25 February 2021, Yaounde, Cameroon.

61 Ibid.

Inaction of Cameroonian MPs and Senators

The inaction/inability of Cameroonian MPs and Senators to ensure that the Anglophone crisis featured on the agenda of any of the sessions of the House of Assembly and/or Senate was baffling, to say the least. Although the crisis and the sufferings had no political coloration, it, nonetheless, suffered from the interplay of party politics. The ruling CPDM outrightly rejected the notion of “independence for the North West and South West Regions” and opted for decentralization in place of a federal system; the vast majority of Anglophones and some Francophones wanted a federal system as discussed earlier. The major opposition party in the Assembly and in the Senate, the SDF, also rejected “independence” and it called for a federal system; it was flexible on the number of federated states.

The MPs and Senators of the CPDM and SDF parties toed their respective party lines, including the Anglophones in the respective parties: the CPDM did not want the subject, the Anglophone crisis, to be tabled and debated in either the Assembly or the Senate unlike the SDF which wanted it to be tabled and debated. They were 35 MPs from the North West and South West Regions in the House of Assembly out of 180; and, 20 Senators from the two regions in the Senate out of 100. Neither the House of Assembly nor the Senate debated the Anglophone crisis in spite of the overwhelming and unquestionable socio-economic devastations it impacted on the population in the two Anglophone regions coupled with the untold humanitarian crisis it created. With the exception of one or two Anglophone MPs and Senators (Hon. Joseph Wirba of the SDF and Senators Victor E. Mukete and Charles Mbella Moki of the CPDM) who, at various instances, vociferously raised the worries of the Anglophones in the House or Senate, most Anglophone MPs and Senators played the role of the deaf and dumb and shied away from insisting that the “crisis” should be put on the agenda of the House of Assembly and/or Senate.

In early 2015, before the outbreak of the crisis, Senator Nfon Victor E. Mukete expressed disgust on an aspect of the Anglophone Problem when he decried the pervasive influence of French in the Anglophone region during a ceremony in Kumba to promote vaccination in primary schools. At that occasion, the representative of Mrs. Chantal Biya began his message in French. In disbelief and astonishment, Senator Nfon Mukete admonished both Mrs. Biya’s representative and the Governor of the South West Region, Bernard Okalia, saying: “What are you people doing? These kids are Anglophones. They don’t understand French. You have to speak to them in English.”⁶² When the Anglophone Crisis erupted in October/November 2016 and

62 Mimi Mefo Info, “Nfon VE Mukete: The voice that was crying in the wilderness,” 13 April 2021. Mrs. Chantal Biya is the wife of President Paul Biya.

Cameroon Members of the National Assembly and Senators failed to table the “Crisis” for debate, Hon. Joseph Wirba took the House to task in December 2016 during the October/November Session. At that occasion, Hon. Wirba lambasted the Members of the House for ignoring the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West Regions. Without mincing words, he bellowed:

There are two Cameroons that came together. If you [Speaker Hon. Cavaye Yeguie Djibril] are telling us like a state minister stood here last year and told us that what happened in Cameroon is like dropping a few cubes of sugar in a basin of water, then tell us who is the sugar and who is the water?... Does the President of this country know that the Governors and the DOs you have sent to West Cameroon [North West and South West Regions] are out there behaving exactly like an army of occupation?

Our ancestors and forefathers trusted you to go into a gentleman's agreement. The two people who consider themselves brothers... [agreed] to live together. If this is what you show us after 56 years, then those who are saying that we should break Cameroon are right! The people of West Cameroon cannot be your slaves. The people of West Cameroon are not [your slaves]; you did not conquer them in war.... *When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes a duty* [Emphasis added].⁶³

Unfortunately, the government and the MPs ignored Wirba's furious diatribe and, for safety concerns, he went into political hibernation. In June 2017, he re-emerged during the parliamentary session and demanded that debates on bills should be shelved until the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West Regions was addressed. In explaining to the media why he decided to return to the House of Assembly, he said defiantly:

After three months of reflection, I came to a simple conclusion that if our people of West Cameroon need me, I need to stand up.... I don't see why bills are examined and voted here for all this time with nothing happening to the common Cameroonian.... The people cry out, you don't listen, more than a million children are out of school for more than six months and the Speaker cannot talk about it. Businesses are closed for half a year because the people are in pains and you don't listen. Teachers talk, you drive them, some are in jail and others in exile.... *The House Speaker could not even let me express myself on the West Cameroon plight but I had to get through fifty years of pains so they should stop humiliating us.... The status quo can no*

63 *The Post Weekender*, No. 01782, Friday, 9 December 2016, 11.

longer hold because fifty years is enough [Emphasis added].⁶⁴

These were Wirba's finest moments in his political career in Cameroon. He rose to prominence within the Anglophone circle overnight and was looked upon as the hero and liberator of Anglophones. This was demonstrated by the hilarious welcome he received when he returned to his homeland in Jakiri, Donga-Mantung Division, after the session. But, this was short-lived because after he poured fuel on the political crisis in the two regions and whipped up secessionist tendency, he escaped to the UK with his family.

As the humiliating agony experienced by the population in the two English-speaking regions mounted and no light appeared at the end of the tunnel, an authoritative voice stepped forward. Senator Nfon Victor Mukete, as the Eldest Member (*Doyen d'age*) in the Senate, took his peers and government ministers present in the Senate session of 5 April 2019 aback when he raised the Anglophone Crisis on the floor of the Senate. Senator Nfon Mukete took to the rostrum and thundered emotionally in his rich baritone:

The reunification of this country places the two official languages on an equal scale but some people because of money want to kill the English language. I am talking with tears. I am over a hundred years old. I love this country and I fought for the reunification of this country. Let us demonstrate honesty, integrity and justice for the good of this country.... *This is what has driven some people against the wall to go and take guns against the very foundations of this country....*

The system has failed, federation is the only way. Ten states federation so each region can manage its affairs. Why are people afraid of federation? *I am not talking like this because the country should be divided. No! I fought hard for the reunification of former Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun. And I can never destroy it. But the country should be federated. Look at America, South Africa, Switzerland, Nigeria, [and] Canada.... What is all this nonsense? My people are dying; they are suffering and we are playing games here in Yaounde. We should be careful* [Emphasis added].⁶⁵

64 Ibid., No. 01830, Friday, 23 June 2017, 12.

65 Mimi Mefo Info, "Nfon VE Mukete: The voice that was crying in the wilderness," 13 April 2021. The author has taken the liberty to cite a large portion of the address because of its immense significance given the context and atmosphere which existed at the time. It needed the political courage and stamina which only Senator Nfon Mukete could muster during that dark period in the political history of Cameroon and more especially that of the North West and South West Regions.

Those who were present on that memorable day in Senate were filled with bewilderment, awe and bemused if he had not crossed the Rubicon. Senator Nfon Mukete was a member of the Central Committee of the ruling CPDM and the Paramount Chief of the Bafaw. He and his father, Chief Abel Mukete, fought tooth and nail to ensure that Southern Cameroons reunited with the Republic of Cameroon (French Cameroon). His position on the situation of Anglophones, therefore, carried enormous political weight.

But, those wielding the politico-military power played dumb and deaf. No Senator, Anglophone or Francophone, rose in support of Senator Nfon Mukete. In the House of Assembly, out of the 180 MPS, 35 (33 CPDM and 2 SDF) were Anglophones. In the Senate, out of 100 Senators, 20 (13 CPDM and 7 SDF) were Anglophones.⁶⁶ Later in the November 2019 Session of Senate, a poorly drafted bill on the promotion of official languages (English and French) which was expected to address some of the causes of the Anglophone crisis was bitterly criticized by Senator Charles Mbella Moki. In rejecting the bill, Mbella Moki took the bull by the horns and lamented in the following words:

[Anglophones] have all voiced concerns which have to do with our living.... If you take their complaint seriously, Mr. President [of Senate], you should know that they are doing the right thing.... You may be a Francophone and you think that these concerns here... [are] emanating [only] from English-speaking Cameroonians. Imagine the poor villagers you have around Moloundou who may not be able to understand the English language... [but] are faced with an Anglophone Magistrate who prefers to communicate with them or deliver judgment in English....

[This bill] betrays the very intention to deny the people of the North West and South West Regions the right to have English as an official language and the right to practice the Common Law in their Courts. We should all be frank and sincere to say that we are tired of seeing the blood of innocent Cameroonians flow on our streets.... [This bill] will go a long way in enriching the separatist argument.⁶⁷

66 These figures were the results of the Legislative elections of September 2020 and the Senatorial elections of March 2018. All the Anglophone MPs and Senators who were of the SDF party came from the North West Region.

67 <https://youtu.be/2gBhnDkoWAW> accessed, 24 May 2021. Moloundou is a Sub-division in the Boumba-et- Ngoko Division of the East Region.

Senator Mbella Moki spoke the minds of several Anglophone senators and ministers in the hall who, for one reason or the other, but for Senator Nfon Victor Mukete, could not voice their thoughts and feelings openly but they applauded his stance since they probably sensed that they had seen somebody to bell the cat. There was no doubt that most Cameroon MPs and Senators failed miserably in the execution of their responsibilities, but more especially most Anglophone MPs and Senators whose people yearned for peace and serenity to return to their regions. The Legislative branch of government, as enshrined in the constitution, was tasked with the responsibilities of: scrutinizing legislations; exercising oversight over government actions through hearings and creating committees of inquiry; and, being the mouthpiece of the population, their constituents. In this regard, the MPs and Senators, but more especially the Anglophone MPs and Senators, abdicated their role.

It should be pointed out that in private conversations, most Anglophone CPDM MPs supported debating the subject in the Assembly and Senate but were cowed because they were afraid of political reprisals from the party and the government.⁶⁸ The action by the 62 Cameroonian MPs was nothing more than hocus-pocus. Since October/November 2016 when the crisis began, Cameroonian MPs and Senators went into political slumber with the exception of Wirba in the House of Assembly in December 2016 and June 2017 before he escaped to the UK and Senators Nfon Victor Mukete and Mbella Moki in Senate in 2019.

The 62 Cameroonian MPs were awakened on 17 February 2021 by the letter of the 40 Democratic Congressmen to President Biden which underscored the crisis in the Anglophone regions; and, after their response of 22 February 2021, they went back to sleep. Nonetheless, it should be recognised that the Cameroonian MPs drove home a pertinent point when they called on the US Congressmen “to ensure that their country is not a refuge for criminal perpetrators and financiers of acts of extreme violence and terrorism” in Cameroon. But, the search for peace was not dampened.

The population of the North West and South West Regions gradually realized the futility of the armed struggle especially as they bore the brunt of the atrocities of Amba fighters as well as those of the military. The blitzkrieg which the secessionists in the diaspora and in Cameroon had promised their sponsors and supporters as propounded in their slogan of “My Trip to Buea” (MTTB) never materialized. The secessionists’ diktat, which forced the population to be submissive, gradually made way for increased rejection of calls to respect lockdowns and ghost towns especially before and during major civil and/or religious ceremonies. For instance, in a futile attempt to disrupt the religious ceremony of the imposition of the *Pallium* on Archbishop Andrew Nkea

68 Based on conversations the author had with several Anglophone CPDM and SDF MPs.

of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Bamenda on 31 January 2021, Amba fighters and their mentors in the diaspora called for a total lockdown in Bamenda from 28 to 31 January 2021.

This was because the Vatican Secretary of State, His Eminence Pietro Cardinal Parolin, went to Cameroon on the instructions of Pope Francis to impose the *Pallium* on His Grace Andrew Nkea during the celebration of a Pontifical Mass on 31 January 2021. During his speech, Archbishop Andrew Nkea did not shy away from criticizing the activities of Amba fighters and, by extension, their sponsors and mentors in the diaspora. In his speech, he said, *inter alia*:

Many of our people have suffered enough from a situation they did not create. And thousands are either internally displaced or have escaped as refugees. Businesses are shut down. And for about four years, our children were not allowed to go to school. Children were used as bait for political motives and struggle. Many priests, religious, bishops, and lay people of this [Ecclesiastical] province have been beaten, harassed, or even killed.... In this time of crisis, we see you [Pietro Cardinal Parolin] as a messenger of peace. We see you as an ambassador of reconciliation. We see you as a promoter of justice...we the people of Bamenda, we lack many things. The one thing we don't lack is faith. The presence here of the people of Bamenda in such great numbers is a sure sign that their faith is greater than politics. *The faith of the people of the Archdiocese of Bamenda is greater than intimidation. And their presence here is proof that the devil is a liar* [Emphasisadded].⁶⁹

Pietro Cardinal Parolin, on his part, recommended dialogue and reconciliation as a solution to the socio-political crisis in the two regions. On 19 May 2021, as the intensity of the violence and destruction unleashed by the crisis ebbed and flowed in the two regions, Prime Minister Dion Ngute chaired a ceremony in Buea for the symbolic destruction of illicit weapons.⁷⁰ The route towards resolving the crisis passed through Paris, London and Washington, D.C. given the diplomatic weight these capitals

69 <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=418169129286343> (accessed 31 January 2021); *The Guardian Post*, No. 2060, Monday, 01 February 2021, 3; *The Star*, No. 618, vol. 2, Monday, 01 February 2021, 2.

70 Those in attendance included the Minister of Defence Joseph Beti Asomo; Minister of External Relations Mbella Mbella; Minister Delegate in the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development; the Governor of the South West Region Bernard Okalia Bilai; the representative of the European Union; the German Ambassador; the Canadian High Commissioner; and, the Nigerian Consul-General to the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon

exercised on Yaounde, but more especially Washington D.C.; and, the clout the three capitals also exerted in the UN.

US Policy and the Anglophone Crisis

The two former UN Administering Authorities of the UN Trust Territories of British Cameroon (the UK) and French Cameroon (France) and the UN failed to play the role of honest broker in the Anglophone Crisis. In the absence of an energetic diplomatic intervention, the onus fell on the USA. This was more so because the most radical and uncompromising Cameroonians in the diaspora who financed and supported the armed secessionists resided in the US; it was no secret that the most de-stabilizing forces resided in and came from the US. The US policy under President Donald Trump was not clearly spelt out and some statements and resolutions from the US Congress towards the crisis emboldened the armed secessionists and their financiers who translated them as official US policy.

As it was mentioned earlier, the US policy emphasized American support for the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon in its *PressRelease* of November 2020 but it was silent on sanctions on those who supported and financed the crisis in Cameroon and sabotaged peace initiatives. In fact, Ambazonians and their financiers even “announced alleged US interventions regarding a supposed [US] military intervention in Cameroon” which they felt would guarantee their independence. It should be recalled that 62 Cameroonian MPs had requested some US Congressmen to assist in preventing Cameroonians residing in the US from fuelling the crisis. In their letter, the MPs urged the US Congressmen “to ensure that their country is not a refuge for criminal perpetrators and financiers of acts of extreme violence and terrorism on the people of Cameroon.”

The US policy with regard to the Anglophone crisis was subsequently spelt out by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in a *Press Statement* dated 7 June 2021. In a move to encourage and advance the peace process, the US government condemned “those who undermine peace through engaging in or inciting violence, human rights violations and abuses, and threats against advocates for peace or humanitarian workers.”⁷¹ The government imposed “visa restrictions on those...responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the peaceful resolution of the crisis....”⁷² In an unmistakable move to re-state the US firm commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon, Secretary

71 US Department of State, *Press Statement*, “Announcement of Visa Restrictions on Those Undermining the Peaceful Resolution of the Crisis in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon,” 7 June 2021.

72 Ibid.

of State Blinken concluded that the US government was “committed to *working together to advance democracy and mutual prosperity for both countries*” [Emphasis added].⁷³ Cameroonian media commented extensively on the *Press Statement*.

For instance, *The Herald* saw the US decision “as an end of the road for Ambazonia leaders instigating atrocities in NW, SW.”⁷⁴ *News Watch*, on its part, described it as putting “Instigators of violence [in the North West and South West Regions] on US red list.”⁷⁵ According to *The Guardian Post*, the US government targeted “those ordering, perpetrating killings, destructions, kidnappings, attack on schools, burning of villages...”⁷⁶

The financiers and supporters of the armed secessionists were thrown under the bus. They had counted on US intervention in favour of the “restoration of their independence”. From their haven in the US, Europe, Nigeria and South Africa, they had hoped to take over the reins of political power in their self-proclaimed Federal Republic of Ambazonia. But the US policy was geared towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis while respecting the unity and territorial integrity of the country and the respect of human rights by both the Cameroon government and the armed secessionists. In the final analysis, the US policy was in line with that of the Cameroon government in rejecting the dismemberment of the Cameroon nation. The Cameroon government was, however, put on notice for it held the key to the success of any genuine dialogue.

The Blinken statement, however, left many grey areas in relation to the “visa restrictions.” It was common knowledge that most of the Cameroonians in the US who fanned and financed the secessionist groups in the two regions in Cameroon and, also bought weapons and transported them to the two regions were either American residents or naturalized American citizens. The “visa restrictions” had no effect on such Cameroonians. In like manner, Cameroonians who were caught by the “visa restrictions” fiat but fanned the crisis and obstructed the search for a peaceful resolution of the crisis were not impacted by the “visa restrictions” if they decided not to travel to the US. It was, therefore, imperative that the US led an international effort, through the UN, to get other countries to take a similar action against Cameroonians who obstructed peaceful initiatives and/or fanned the crisis. Finally, the call for dialogue without “pre-conditions” required that the US threw its full weight behind its call for a genuine and all-inclusive dialogue.

73 Ibid.

74 *The Herald*, No. 103, Wednesday, 09 June 2021, 1.

75 *News Watch*, No. 096, Wednesday, 09 June 2021, 1.

76 *The Guardian Post*, No. 2164, Wednesday, 09 June 2021, 1.

It is worth recalling that in February 2021, some 40 Democratic members of the US Congress requested the Biden Administration to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Cameroonian immigrants in the US. At that time, the Biden Administration did not react one way or the other. On 15 April 2022, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas reacted positively to the request and granted Cameroonian immigrants in the US Temporary Protected Status (TPS). These immigrants, however, were expected to have been in the US as of 14 April 2022. The TPS which was granted to Cameroonian immigrants was in accordance to the US 1990 Immigration Law which authorized the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to grant temporary protective status to people from countries experiencing natural disasters and other “extraordinary conditions.”

The “extraordinary conditions” imposed by the armed conflict in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon and the Boko Haram insurgency in the Grand North justified the American decision as the conditions in these regions rendered the country unsafe for the Cameroonian immigrants to be returned to Cameroon. These immigrants were expected to fulfil certain conditions. However, it was feared within certain circles in-and-out of Cameroon that some of these immigrants would use their TPS to fan the crisis in the North West and South West Regions through hate speeches, funding, etc.

The armed conflict impacted enormously on women and children and their call for peace attracted greater attention from the national and international community. Several women’s groups in the North West and South West Regions organised peaceful sit-ins and demonstrations in Buea and Bamenda. They called for a peaceful resolution of the crisis and the cessation of hostilities. Unfortunately, the calls went unheeded. But the most publicized action by Cameroonian women calling for an end to armed conflicts in Cameroon, with emphasis on the Anglophone crisis, was by the National Women’s Convention for Peace in Cameroon which held in Yaounde from 29-31 July 2021.

First National Women’s Convention for Peace in Cameroon

The three-day convention which held in Yaounde from 29-31 July 2021 and sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Germany brought together approximately 1,000 women from 38 women’s groups and some male participants. They agreed to work towards the return and consolidation of peace within their respective families in what they termed a “Patriotic Commitment.”⁷⁷ In addressing the armed conflict, and

⁷⁷ “Women’s Call for Peace in Cameroon,” First National Women’s Convention for Peace in Cameroon, 31 July 2021, Yaounde.

more particularly the crisis in the two Anglophone regions, the National Women's Convention called for:

1. An immediate and permanent end to hostilities;
2. Continuous and inclusive dialogue;
3. Equal and permanent involvement of women as peace negotiators;
4. The creation and re-enforcement of existing centres for psychosocial support and trauma-healing;
5. Rendering existing DDR centres functional and responsive to the existing conflicts.⁷⁸

The women appealed to their “sisters, husbands, brothers and sons “to join them in “this patriotic commitment.”⁷⁹ Unfortunately, most of the women who actually felt the pains and atrocities in the villages and towns in the North West and South Regions were not invited; most of those who were invited were from their secured comfort zones in either Buea, Bamenda, Yaoundé, Douala or abroad; they, in most cases, never took the risk to go to their villages and towns in the two regions. In addition, women in the diaspora who played key roles, directly or indirectly, in fanning the crisis either through the shipment of weapons to Amba fighters in the two Anglophone regions or financing the armed secessionist groups were not invited. And the crisis took its toll as civilians, mostly Anglophones; members of the national defence and security forces; and, armed secessionists, commonly referred to as Amba fighters, were killed during clashes between the military and Amba fighters.

Understanding the Duration of the Crisis

In November 2016 and early 2017, the government thought that the Anglophone Crisis and the Anglophone Problem were a passing political storm, a storm in a teacup, with little or no permanent socio-political scar on the Cameroon nation. Although the government held several meetings with the striking English-speaking teachers' trade unions and lawyers' associations, the government initially thought that money, through corruption and bribery, would weaken the strike action as it dished out millions of franc CFA.

Unfortunately for the government, some members of the trade unions and associations collected the money but refused to change course. Bamenda, through the action of the

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

government, became the epicenter of the Anglophone crisis given that all government-sponsored meetings and dialogue with the striking teachers in 2016 and 2017 took place in Bamenda in high publicity while the meetings in Buea with the Lawyers were low-keyed. Buea, however, became the ultimate goal and coveted prize of the armed secessionists as hundreds of millions of franc CFA were collected from sympathizers and supporters of the secessionist cause in-and-out of Cameroon to facilitate the sacking of Buea. The objective was to take over the reins of government under the banner of “My Trip To Buea” (MTTB). It was, of course, wishful thinking for it never materialized and it could not have materialized. This reality eventually dawned on some frontline leaders like Cho Ayaba who, in April 2022, said that the Ambazonian struggle would only be won in Bamenda and not in Buea.

The Anglophone crisis dragged on as the government held tenaciously to its constitutional responsibility to safeguard the unity and territorial integrity of the nation. On the other hand, most of the Amba fighters later became armed robbers specialized in the abductions of innocent civilians for ransom; almost all being Anglophones. The fighters and most of the frontline leaders in the diaspora and their financiers realized that their dream of an independent North West and South West Regions was unattainable and found it hard to abandon the “struggle” after they had reaped huge sums of money from the human and socio-economic destruction they imposed on the Anglophone population in the two regions.

Broadly speaking, the crisis was prolonged for the following reasons:

1. The government failed to get all its members to focus on the politico-military defeat of the armed fighters as some members of the national defence and security forces connived with the secessionists;
2. The government lacked the “political will” to embrace the subject of *federalism* which would have pulled the rug under the feet of the secessionists;
3. The dossier of the Anglophone crisis was managed as the preserved domain of the Presidency where moderate voices with a genuine understanding of the Problem were in very short supply and the Prime Minister’s Office was, sadly enough, reduced to nothing more than a mail box;
4. The government believed that a decisive military solution was possible;
5. Some influential Cameroonians in-and-out of Cameroon aided and financed the armed struggle which in some cases had nothing to do with “the restoration of our independence”;
6. Some Cameroonians who supported and/or financed the crisis and the armed secessionists had in mind 2025 when the presidential elections would be held;

the seven-year mandate would end in 2025 given that Biya was elected in 2018. In their thinking, the prolongation of the crisis/armed secession until the presidential elections would ease the replacement of Biya;

7. The armed struggle became a brisk money-making business which benefitted some military and administrative officials who did not want the crisis to end, and the armed fighters who basked in abductions for ransom;
8. The armed fighters gradually got possession of sophisticated weapons (AK-47, for example) and were also able to use IEDs with some deadly results;
9. The government refrained from engaging in a full military operation with all the military hardware in its possession for a “search and destroy mission.” It did not want to attract the wrath of the international community and especially the leaders of some Western countries who felt that Biya had been President of Cameroon for 34 years (when the crisis erupted in 2016) and the year 2022 made him 40 years as President at the age of 89. They felt that Biya had overstayed in power;
10. The crisis provided a unique opportunity for some unscrupulous Cameroonians to settle scores with their political and/or business competitors;
11. A reasonable proportion of the population became disenchanted with both the armed secessionists and the military on account of their atrocities and in most cases refused to collaborate with either of the parties;
12. Some of the fighters had an excellent mastery of their terrain and this worked to the disadvantage of the military. This was the case of “Field Marshal” Oliver Lekeaka of Lebialem where the extremely hilly and rocky terrain and very poor road network worked to his advantage;
13. Decentralization and a Special Status were not what a vast majority of Anglophones wanted;
14. The main secessionist leaders in the diaspora found haven in their various countries of residence where some of them were either residents or citizens. From their comfort zones, they spat out destructive hate speeches, and channeled finances and weapons to the fighters;
15. Most of the frontline Ambazonian leaders in the diaspora were corrupt, disunited and traded insults against each other which made it extremely difficult to have a united voice to confront the government;
16. The motley secessionist groups were in very short supply of honest, well-intentioned, dedicated and committed leaders; and,

17. The government did not make it possible for the Churches, for instance the Roman Catholic Church in Cameroon, to act as mediator or facilitator in seeking ways and means to solve the crisis because it alleged that the Churches were sympathetic to the cause of the separatists. The activities and statements of some of the ministers of the Church, Catholics and non Catholics, did not assuage the allegations of the government.

It was known that some officials of the national defence and security forces cooperated with the secessionists. For example, some members of the security forces sold weapons and ammunitions to the armed groups. Secondly, the military knew most of the camps and hideouts of Amba fighters. But, strangely enough, the military, more often than not, attacked the camps and/or hideouts only after the armed fighters had fled. In some instances, after several hours of gun battle between the professionally trained military and the untrained Amba fighters, few of the fighters were neutralized while several of them escaped.

In other instances, Amba fighters outmaneuvered the military: “Field Marshal” Oliver Lekeaka of Lebialem in the South West Region and “General” No Pity in the North West Region were two examples. In addition, civilian informants became increasingly reluctant to cooperate with the military. Some of the informants complained that Amba fighters and their surrogates living in the community arrogantly told them: “Nothing can be done to us if you report us.”⁸⁰ Some of the arrested fighters were released after reportedly “negotiating” with the police/gendarmes.” Those who were released returned to the community and created havoc as the names of the informants were, allegedly, given to the arrested fighters by the police and/or gendarmes.⁸¹

The reasons for the prolongation of the crisis were well diagnosed by Frankline Ekume Njume as follows:

Some informants who defected were betrayed by uniform men and later treated as traitors by ambazonian terrorists.... Some men in uniform were actively caught either selling ammunition to terrorists.... International humanitarian organisations were misled to think that the terrorists were instead the victims.... Some faithful spies were victims of mass punishment meted on communities which harboured terrorists....Some security alerts from civilians were either not taken seriously or promptly acted upon by... [those] in the uniform force.⁸²

80 Interview with some youths in Bomaka, Buea, Saturday, 24 November 2018.

81 Ibid.

82 https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1015064815974616&id=100024133214636&sfn-

It was an open secret that some government officials (administrators and military) and Amba fighters and their sponsors, as stated above, benefitted financially from the continuation of the crisis. This was aptly stated by Bishop Emmanuel Abbo of the Diocese of Ngaoundere in January 2022. Bishop Abbo, President of the 45th Plenary Assembly of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) which held in Ngaoundere from 8-15 January 2022, did not mince words when he said in an interview with Radio France Internationale (RFI) that:

The crisis in Anglophone Cameroon continues because there are some people who maintain it, precisely because it suits them. There are some who will do nothing to stop this crisis because for them this crisis has a certain financial and material advantage.... It has become a business for the Ambazonians who commit exactions, who rob the population. It has become a way for them to get rich. The crisis is also maintained by certain authorities who do not want this war to end because it is to their advantage.⁸³

In spite of the activities of some actors in favour of a continuation of the crisis, Dion Ngute, since his appointment as Prime Minister of Cameroon in 2019, never gave up in his search for peace in the crisis-ridden North West and South West Regions. In September 2021, he visited Buea again after his 2020 visit. The September 2021 visit was a four-day peace mission. While in Buea, he used the visit to highlight the importance of the Special Status accorded to the North West and South West Regions. Later, from 5-8 October 2021, he took his quest for peace to the North West Region as he did in 2020. Although the armed separatists tried to disrupt his peace caravan at Matazem in Mezam Division with gunshots, the population ignored the threats and turned out massively to receive him. During his four-day working visit to the North West Region, the renowned Amba "General Scatter" and 12 Amba fighters laid down their weapons at the Bamenda Commercial Avenue and were received by Prime Minister Dion Ngute.

But, as the year 2022 inched to its end, the Anglophone crisis continued to be a serious menace to the state. The threats by Ambazonian leaders in-and-out of Cameroon to disrupt the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) Finals which were hosted by

sn=mo (accessed 26 August 2021). Frankline Ekume Njume was a fervent supporter of the actions of the government against the armed secessionists. He was a teacher with the Ministry of Basic Education and his militancy in favour of the government, allegedly, earned him an appointment as the Bursar of Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Mendong, Yaounde. He, however, later fell out with the government and was relieved of his duties as Bursar of GBHS, Mendong. He was sent back to his Ministry of origin, the Ministry of Basic Education.

83 Bishop Emmanuel Abbo, Interview with Radio France Internationale (RFI), Ngaoundere, 16 January 2022.

Cameroon from 9 January to 6 February 2022 woefully failed to materialize. The scheduled matches in the sea-side resort city of Limbe were played with no disruption although Amba leaders had vowed that none of the matches would be played in Limbe, which they claimed was a city in Ambazonia.⁸⁴ Of course, the government did not give up its search for a solution to the conflict. The socio-economic toll occasioned by the conflict with the humanitarian crisis it created definitely gave the government sleepless nights even if the latter was never tired of saying: "Everything is under control."

The collapse of the intensity of the crisis with regard to its human and socio-economic toll on the population in the two regions in particular and Cameroon in general was regrettably stated by Mark Bareta in a very somber mood as follows:

The saddest thing is that they [the government] are succeeding. Lebialem has completely fallen under LRC [La Republique du Cameroun] control... and life has returned to normal in Lebialem. I have seen Youth day [11 February 2022] celebrations in # Wum, #Kumbo, #Kumba, #Buea and even #Bamenda, but the one that pissed me off the most, is Lebialem.... We no longer have the effect we used to have in 2019.⁸⁵

This was very disappointing to Bareta because Ambazonian frontline leaders, led by the Communication Secretary Chris Anu, called for a total boycott of the celebrations and warned parents not to allow their children to go out of their houses on Friday, 11 February 2022. Bareta supported the boycott of Youth Day celebrations.

The duration of the crisis surprised the government; the Anglophone teachers and lawyers in particular and Anglophones in general; Ambazonian leaders and their financiers; and, supporters of Ambazonia as well as the international community. When the crisis began in October/November 2016, nobody thought that it would last for six years but six years later, the crisis was ongoing with no permanent solution in sight yet. It was believed that armed separatists/secessionists, supported by the Anglophone population, would walk to Buea and take over the government on a platter of gold under the slogan of "My Trip to Buea" (MTTB). But in April 2022, Cho Ayaba, having realized the futility of taking over Buea, stated that the struggle for the freedom of the North West and South West Regions through their independence would not be won in

84 Fifty-two matches were programmed for AFCON 2021. The matches were played in five towns/cities in Cameroon: Bafoussam, Douala, Garoua, Limbe and Yaoundé. Yaounde with two stadia had the lion's share of the scheduled matches while the other four towns with one stadium each had less matches. Limbe hosted eleven of the 52 matches. It also hosted the Burkina Faso vs. Gabon and Mali vs. Equatorial Guinea Round of 16 Fixture.

85 <https://www.facebook.com//104954428492449/posts/244244601230097> accessed on 11 February 2022.

Buea but rather in Bamenda.

Conclusion

President Biya convened a Major National Dialogue which was expected to address the “the high aspirations” of the population of the North West and South West Regions. The product from the Major National Dialogue ignored “the high aspirations;” and, a Special Status, as provided for in the 1996 constitution, was adopted and signed into law.

Most Cameroonians, especially Anglophones, expected to see the fruits of the “Special Status” once the law was signed, failing to understand that the budget, already voted and adopted before the law was signed, did not make provisions for the “Special Status. However, the Cameroon government engaged Ambazonian leaders in several secret “Talks” which initially did not bear fruits. The US Senate drafted a resolution in September 2020 which called on the Cameroon government and the armed secessionist groups to engage in an all-inclusive dialogue and respect human rights. Towards the end of September, some armed secessionist groups revoked the school boycott which they had imposed in November 2016. But, the call for the resumption of school was rejected by the ARF in a *Press Release* of 25 September 2020. The ARF’s rejection of school resumption was immediately countered by some prominent frontline secessionist leaders and more importantly by the Ayuk Tabe IG.

But the armed secessionist groups executed their threats of brutally attacking some schools. The US position of supporting the territorial integrity of Cameroon was not translated into action as secessionist leaders who were in the US were allowed to freely finance the various Amba fighters and also sent out audios and videos promoting heinous crimes. The elections into the Regional Councils and the putting in place the bodies provided for in the Special Status did not produce the expected socio-political serenity.

The decision by some US Congressmen to draw the attention of President Biden to the situation in Cameroon drew quick condemnation from some Cameroonian MPs who had failed to address the crisis in either the House of Assembly or the Senate. It was expected that the visit of Pietro Cardinal Parolin to Bamenda on 31 January 2021 would rekindle the quest for a peaceful solution to the crisis. The decision by the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, in June 2021, to sanction those who were a hindrance to the quest for a peaceful resolution of the crisis was an added impetus to those committed to the search for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. A call to end the hostilities and engage in an inclusive-dialogue was also launched by the National Women’s Convention for Peace in Cameroon. But several factors militated against a quick resolution to the crisis.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Cameroon is made up of a multiplicity of ethnic groups with diverse cultures and values. The colonial history of the people compounded the decolonization process because the people were colonized at various times of their colonial history by Germany; and, as a divided former Germany Kamerun by Britain and France. Before the German colonization, the people lived in “independent” states, chiefdoms or kingdoms and it was only through military expeditions, collaboration and cooperation with the various chiefs, fons and kings that the Germans were able, between 1884 and 1916, to create what became German Kamerun. No European nation colonized Cameroon before 1884 because no territory existed as Cameroon; Victoria from 1858 to 1887 was “owned” by the London Baptist Missionary Society which sold it to the German Basel Mission in 1887 through an Exchange of Notes with the British and German governments acting as facilitators.

Before the defeat and expulsion of Germany from the territory in 1916, the Germans had successfully created, although through enormous sacrifice by the indigenous population, the spirit and sense of a “one Kamerun nation.” The various populations recognized themselves as belonging to one nation--Kamerun. The defeat of the Germans in Kamerun led to their expulsion from the territory. Former German Kamerun was provisionally partitioned between Britain and France and later recognized by the League of Nations as mandated territories of the League. Britain and France were tasked by the League to administer their respective spheres of former German Kamerun as mandated territories of the League. In spite of the differences in the politico-administrative system of the British Indirect Rule and the French Assimilation (later Association) policy, the population of British Cameroons and French Cameroon did not forget the notion of once-a-united German Kamerun. After World War II and the rise of nationalism, many Cameroonians in both the British and French Cameroons talked more and more of a reunified British and French Cameroons.

British Cameroons was, for administrative convenience, divided into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. The decolonization process in British Cameroons was complicated by the divergent interests of the foreign stakeholders and the lack of a political consensus amongst the territory’s politicians on the political future of the territory. Southern Cameroons politicians were initially unanimous that they wanted a regional status within Nigeria and not administered as an integral part of Nigeria as was the case since 1916 and especially after 1922. The creation of the KNC

and the KPP in 1953 and the KNDP in 1955 brought to the fore the political differences between Southern Cameroons politicians on the question of the political future of the territory.

In the political debate, three options emerged in Southern Cameroons: independence of the territory in association with Nigeria which was advocated by the KNC and the KPP and supported by the NCNC and the AG of Nigeria; independence by reuniting with French Cameroon which, in substance, was supported by the KNDP and the UPC in French Cameroon (later by the OK when the UPC was banned in Southern Cameroons); and, finally, secession and independence as a separate political entity which was initially supported by the traditional rulers and between 1959 and 1960 by the KUP and half-heartedly by some KNDP members and later by the KNDP and the KNC/KPP Alliance between October 1959 and November 1960. The territory's Quasi-Federal Status, 1954-1958, and later Regional Status failed to rally the territory's politicians around a common political option. The victory of the KNDP in the January 1959 General Elections did not settle the political option and the UN was called upon to step in.

At the UN in October 1959, Southern Cameroons politicians finally proposed a common position: independence as a separate political entity which was grandiosely called the "Third Option." The "Third Option" was regarded as resolving the impasse associated with the "Two Options" of *independence in association* with Nigeria or *independence by reuniting* with French Cameroon (Republic of Cameroon). The "Third Option" was rejected by the UN in October 1959 and another attempt in November 1960 also failed. The rejection of the "Third Option" did not change the political and campaign strategies of the KNDP which wanted and accepted *reunification* with the Republic of Cameroon nor the CPNC which advocated *association* with Nigeria. Foncha and Ahidjo re-affirmed their common position in the *Two Alternatives* and the UN issued Resolutions 1514 and 1541 in December 1960. The plebiscite campaign and the KNDP victory rekindled the latent ethnic animosity between the politically informed class of the Bamenda Grassfield and that of the Forest Zone (the present-day North West and South West Regions respectively). The CPNC initially wanted that the results should be interpreted and implemented as obtained in the ethnic and clan areas and took its "case" to the UN in April 1961.

The UN deliberated and adopted the results as they were presented by the UN Plebiscite Commission. The KNDP's victory of independence upon Southern Cameroons joining the Republic of Cameroon was contained in UN Resolution 1608 (XV) of 21 April 1961. The UN also gave the United Kingdom, the Republic of Cameroon and Southern

Cameroons the responsibility of ensuring that the UN trusteeship administration over Southern Cameroons ended at midnight on 30 September 1961. Although the KNDP and CPNC agreed on a “Truce”, in April and May 1960 in New York and Buea respectively, to make *reunification* a success, it was easier said than done. The only meeting which the opposition CPNC attended to discuss the organization and implementation of reunification with the Republic of Cameroon was the Foumban Constitutional Conference of July 1961. Foncha left out the CPNC in his subsequent meetings with Ahidjo in May and June 1961 in Yaounde and Buea and also at the crucial August 1961 Yaounde Tripartite Talks. The refusal by Foncha to table the draft federal constitution at the June 1961 Bamenda “All-Party” Constitutional Conference and the absence of the CPNC at the August 1961 Yaounde Tripartite Talks proved politically detrimental to Southern Cameroons.

During the Yaounde Tripartite Talks, the Yaounde and Buea delegations agreed on the constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon and merely informed the London delegation led by Christopher Eastwood. At the “Talks”, the burning issue of the “Transfer of Sovereignty” was settled through the principle of Exchange of Notes. The draft federal constitution which emerged from the “Talks” was later deliberated and adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon in August 1961; the SCHA was never accorded the opportunity to deliberate and adopt the constitution. At midnight, 30 September 1961, Ahidjo, in Buea and in the presence of Foncha and the British Deputy Commissioner Milne ended the UN trusteeship administration over Southern Cameroons following statements from Queen Elizabeth II, the British Secretary of State for Colonies and President Ahmadou Ahidjo. On 1st October 1961, Southern Cameroons attained independence upon its joining the Republic of Cameroon on the “basis of a federation.” The Constitution, in its Articles 5, 6, 47 and 59 unconsciously sowed the seeds of the Anglophone Problem especially as the Ahidjo government, and later the Biya government, failed to adequately implement the constitution to ensure the equality of the two foreign-derived cultures as the *basis for reunification*.

The failure to allow the two foreign-derived cultures to operate in their respective spheres and to blend them only at the centre caused the Anglophone Problem. The eruption of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016 because of corporate grievances by Anglophone teachers’ trade unions and Common Law lawyers’ associations was merely the tip of the iceberg. Initially, the government down-played the seriousness of the crisis while the extremists in the teachers’ unions and the lawyers’ associations insisted on nothing short of the secession and independence of the North West and South West Regions. The associates of *secession and independence* who advocated armed conflict

and violence, with all its associated ills, were supported and directed by some Anglophones in the diaspora in an unsuccessful attempt to achieve their goal.

The secessionists, it was alleged, were also supported by some Cameroonians in the country. The government, on the other hand, rejected any mention of *secession and independence* of part of the national territory. The devastation caused by the armed conflict and the call for an all-inclusive national dialogue to solve the “problem” led to the Major National Dialogue of 30 September-4 October 2019. The outcome of the Major National Dialogue, chaired by Prime Minister Chief Dr. Dion Ngute, was the Special Status which was presented as a panacea for the Anglophone Problem and Crisis. Unfortunately, it failed to address “the high aspirations of the people of the North-West and South-West Regions.”

Nonetheless, in continuation with the provision of the contents of the Special Status, regional elections were held into the Regional Assembly and the Regional Executive Council on 6 December and 22 December 2020 respectively. The Minister of Decentralization and Local Development and President Biya signed an Order on 18 December and a Decree on 24 December 2020 respectively. The Order of the Minister laid down the standing orders spelling out the duties of the Regional Assembly and Regional Council while the Presidential Decree defined the duties of the PIC and his/her areas of competence. The regional elections and the two legal instruments, however, were not enough to bring the armed conflict to an end. Some Cameroonian MPs condemned the position of some US Congressmen who highlighted the Anglophone crisis to US President Biden while they shied away from tabling the crisis for debate in either the House or the Senate. In February 2022, the Biden Administration granted TPS to Cameroonian immigrants in the USA.

The visit of the Vatican Secretary of State, Pietro Cardinal Parolin, to Cameroon for the imposition of the *Pallium* on His Grace Archbishop Andrew Nkea provided an opportunity for the Pope’s envoy to discuss the Anglophone crisis with President Biya, Prime Minister Dion Ngute and Cameroon’s College of Bishops. But a peaceful solution was still elusive. An appeal for a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict by the National Women’s Convention for Peace in Cameroon did not also bear fruits. The crisis entered its sixth year, 2022, because of several forces which collectively prolonged it.

However, the intensity of the conflict and its associated atrocities reduced in 2022 but it was not ‘under control.’ Several secret peace talks and meetings failed to resolve the crisis/conflicts as the year 2022 made way for 2023. In any case, all conflicts/wars always

end where they should have started; sitting round a table to talk on ways and means of settling the conflict or war. The Anglophone Problem/Crisis is no exception if a lasting and durable peaceful co-existence between the peoples of the North West and South West Regions on the one hand and those of the other eight regions, on the other hand, is the ultimate goal. A goal which is in line with the government's unshakable position to defend the territorial integrity and unity of the country.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

I) Archival Materials

A) National Archives Yaounde(NAY)

2AC 9800, Mbida (A. Marie) Politique 1956.

3AC 1852, Anti-upecisme 1953; L'Affaire UPC/Gâteau 1953.

3AC 1853, Um Nyobe (Reuben) Programme Politique 1953.

3AC 1867, Journaux Politiques Création 1956.

APA 10123/B, Guerre 1939-1945 : Déclaration de guerre instructions ministérielles.

APA 11229/0, Manifestations anti-françaises d'indigènes, juillet 1940.

APA 12066/S, Indigénat 1921 : Politique Indigène.

Ta 102, Rapport du Capitaine Langheld sur la fin des troubles de Bangwa.

B) National Archives, Buea(NAB)

— "All-Party Foumban Conference Opens: President Ahidjo Advocates Federal Constitution." *Press Release*, No. 1467. 20th July 1961

Administrative Department. Premier's Correspondence. Southern Cameroons. Vb/n/1960/5.

Ba "All-Party Constitutional Conference." Vb/B/1961. File AOD/8/61.

Ba/ 1916/3, Reports on various Matters Relating to the Cameroon

Ba (1920)⁵, Special Report on the Cameroons Province, February 1920.

Ba (1938)², File No. 2457, Cameroons Province:Notes for the League of Nations Report 1938.

Letter A.N. Jua. Boyo-Kom, Njinikom. His Excellency, the President of the Federal Republic. Yaounde, 26 February 1972. PMO, 327/59

Sca Information Service, Buea. "A Message from the Hon. Premier." *Press Release*, No. 1505. 15 August 1961.

— "Full Text of an Address by the Acting Commissioner of the Cameroons, Mr. H. N. Milne, At Mamfe on Monday August 10th 1959." *Press Release*, No. 42. August 1959.

- _____ "Memorandum Submitted by Mr. Ntumazah, leader of One Kamerun Party at the Mamfe Summit Conference, August 10 and 11." *Press Release*, No. 425.14 August 1959.
- _____ "Memorandum Submitted to the Plebiscite Conference at Mamfe by the National Conference of Kamerun Students (Nigeria): 10-11 August 1959." *Press Release*, No.431.19 August 1959.
- _____ "Draft Federal Constitution Tabled Before Cameroons Republic National Assembly." *Press Release*, No 1504. 11th August 1961.
- _____ "Foumban Conference Ends in Complete Success." *Press Release*, No.1468.24 July 1961.
- _____ "Premier and Opposition Leader Disagree at UN by Reuter." *Press Release*, No.485.29 September 1959.
- _____ "Premier Donates £50 to Relatives of deceased CDC Workers." *Press Release*, No 1509. 15th August 1961.
- _____ "September Session of Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs Adjourns Sine die. House Passes Unanimously Three Government Bills as well as One Motion moved by Premier Foncha." *Press Release*, No 1534. 5th September 1961.
- _____ "Sca (West Cameroon) Achieves Independence by Joining Cameroon Republic to for [sic]-Federal Cameroon Republic Forms State of West Cameroon New Federal Cameroon Republic." *Press Release*. No 1562. 7th October 1961.
- _____ EML Endeley. Vc/b/ (1959) No. Comm.S.94/Bol.11 195. Statutory Instruments 1960. No 1655 West Africa: The Southern Cameroons Plebiscite Order-in-Council, 1960. Vc/a (1960)18.
- _____ No. 1658 West Africa: Southern Cameroons (Constitutional) Order-in-Council, 1960. Vc/a (1960)18.
- _____ Top Secret No.323/CFI/CAB/PR. "Representation to His Excellency, The President of the Republic of Cameroon by the West Cameroon Government requesting Rectification of Certain Matters Tending to Hinder the Smooth and Effective Functioning of the Federal Republic."
- _____ *West Cameroon House of Assembly Debates: Official Report*. Buea: Government Press, 1961.
- West Cameroon Information Service, Buea. "Prime Minister Declares a Three-Day Thanksgiving period." January-June 1961. Buea: Government Press, 1961.

_____ *West Cameroon Press Release, January-June 1961.* Buea: Government Press, 1961.

.Top Secret No 332/CF/CAB/PR. The President of the Republic to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon. Buea, December 5, 1962.

Vb/b/ 1947/1, Kamerun Peoples Party Area Headquarters - Buea.

Vb/b (1951)1, File No. VI 757, Cameroons Unification Movement(KUNC).

Vb/b (1951)2, Cameroons Youth League: Bamenda Branch.

Vb/b/1956/1, File No. 6168, Union of Population of the Cameroons.

Vc/b/ 1961/2, Foumban Conference 17th July-21st 1961.

Vc/b/1961/3, Tripartite Conference, Yaounde, August 1961.Cameroons Province, Annual Report, 1947.

C)The National Archives (TNA))London

Administration of the Cameroons. CO554/1744. File No. WAF 33/78/01.

Constitutional Position of the Southern Cameroons. CO554/913. File No. WAF 16/78/02.

Electoral Arrangement: Southern Cameroons. Defence Aspects CO554/160. File No. WAF16/4401.

Movement for the Unification of the Two Trust Territories of the Cameroons CO554/1745. File No. WAF.33/78/02

CO554/1055, File No. WAF 16/440/02

Reports on Separation of Southern Cameroons from Nigeria. Co554/1661. File No. WAF16/440/02.

Terms of the Unification of the Southern Cameroons with the Cameroons Republic. CO554/1662. WAF.16/440/03.

CO 649/6, 15592.

CO 649, Vol. 6, Minute (Draft) for Treasury, 31 March 1916.

CO 649, Vol. 7, Letter No. 321/1916 Dobell to S. of S. Colonies Bonar Law, Duala 2 February 1916.

CO 649/7, 15672.

CO 10908, 2-2-16, Minutes by A.J.H. 7/13/16.

D) Autobiographies

Kuoh, Christian-Tobie. *Une fresque du régime Ahidjo* (1970-1982 Tome 2 de *Mon témoignage*. Paris : Karthala, 1991.

_____ *Mon Témoignage : Le Cameroun de l'Indépendance* (1958-1970). Paris: Karthala, 1990.

Mbile, Nerius N. *Cameroon Political Story: Memories of an Authentic Eye-Witness*. Limbe: Presprint, n.d.

- Milne, Malcolm. *No Telephone to Heaven: From Apex to Nadir-Colonial Service in Nigeria, Aden, the Cameroons and the Gold Coast, 1938-61*. Hans, England: Meon Hill Press, 1999.
- Mukete, Victor E. *My Odyssey: The Story of Cameroon Reunification with Authentic Letters of Key Players*. Yaounde: Eagle Publishing, 2013.

II

Communiqués, Interviews, Letters, Memoranda, Messages and Statements

- Ambassador Macharia Kamau. "Message From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." Nairobi, Kenya. 24 November 2018.
- Bishop Andrew Nkea, "Statement of the Bishop of Mamfe Diocese." Mamfe, 22 November 2018.
- Bishop Emmanuel Abbo. Interview, Radio France Internationale (RFI). 16 January 2022, Ngaoundere.
- Department of Self-Defense and Security. The Federal Republic of Ambazonia. "ARF Ground Zero Command has not authorized the Reopening of Schools." Ref: DSS/SCH/25092020. 25 September 2020.
- Dinka, Gorji. "The New Social Order, 1985."
- Director-General of NASLA. "Presentation to the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Committee on the Follow-up of the Implementation of the Major National Dialogue." 22 September 2021, Buea.
- First National Women's Convention for Peace in Cameroon. "Women's Call for Peace in Cameroon," 29-31 July 2021, Yaounde.
- Foncha, John Ngu. "Dr J.N Foncha's Letter of Resignation from the CPDM." No. RDPC/CC/PN. 9 June 1990."
- Government of Cameroon "Government Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan in the North West and South West Regions 2018-2019," 2018.
- International Crisis Group. "Report International Crisis Group, 2017."
- Joint Committee of the Elites of the North-West and South-West Provinces Resident in the Littoral Province. Memorandum Presented to the Head of State and Chairman of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement.
- Members of the Cameroon House of Assembly. "To the Members of the United States Congress Signatories of the Correspondence of 17th February 2020 to the President of the United States Requesting TPS and DED for Cameroonians." 22 February 2021, Yaounde, Cameroon.

Mezam Section of the CPDM. "Memorandum submitted by the Mezam Section of the People's Democratic Movement to His Excellency President Paul Biya Chairman of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement and Head of State on the Events of 26th May 1990 at Bamenda." 1 June 1990.

Ministère de la Défense. "Communiqué Radio-Pressé." No.08254/C/MINDEF/01. Yaounde. 23 Novembre 2018.

Muna, Solomon T. Prime Minister of West Cameroon, Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, Speaker of the National Assembly. Interview by author 10-11 March 1990. Ngyen-Mbo, Mbengwi, Bamenda, Cameroon.

Ngniman, Z. and Anne-Marie Ngono. "Lettre Ouverte a Monsieur le Ministre de l'Information et de la Culture." Yaoundé, 6 juin 1990.

Nintcheu, Jean Michel. "Press Statement Following the Petition of Certain Cameroonian Parliamentarians Requesting the Extradition of Some Compatriots From the USA." 25 February 2021, Douala, Cameroon.

Osih, Joshua N. *Press Release*, 25 February 2021, Yaounde, Cameroon.

The University of Bamenda. *Press Release*. Ref. No. 2018/053/UBa/VC/REG. 26 October 2018.

UK West Africa Department, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Ref. TO2020/22405, 12 November 2020.

US Embassy, Yaounde. *Press Releases and Statements*.

III

Articles, Manuscripts and Reports

Ahidjo, Ahmadou. "Statement on General Policy to the Ebolowa Congress of the Union Camerounaise, 4-8 July 1962."

Amaazee, Victor Bong. "The Myth of Dr E.M.L Endeley's Pride in Bongfen Chem-Langhee's Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities and Nationalist Movement 1953-1961." *Epasa Moto: A Bilingual Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities*. Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 2004): 1-19.

Ardener, Edwin. "The Kamerun Idea." *West Africa*. 13 September 1958.

Cameroon Development Corporation. *Annual Report and Accounts for the 12 Months ended 30th June, 1984*. Yaounde: SOPECAM, 1985.

Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA). "A Report on Atrocities Committed Against Civilians by Armed Separatist Fighters Between May and August 2020." Buea: September 2020.

- _____. "Human Rights Violations Committed by the Military Between May and August 2020 in the North-West (NWR) and South West (SWR) Regions of Cameroon." Buea: September 2020.
- Chem-Langhee, Bongfen. "The Origin of the Southern Cameroon House of Chiefs." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. 16, 4 (1983): 653-673.
- _____. "Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities and Nationalist Movement, 1953-1961." *Afrika-Zamani (Review of African History)* 14 et 15 (June 1984): 147-163.
- Dongmo, Samuel. "Geopolitics at Play in Imperfect Arenas: US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Introduced Resolution on Cameroon with Dictation of Sanction." *African Union Citizen Journal* <africanservices@aol.com>. 18 September 2020.
- Foncha, John Ngu. "Brief Account of the Events which Took Place in the Bamenda Township on Saturday 26th May 1990 culminating in the shooting and killing of five innocent Young Men and one Girl." Bamenda. June 1990.
- Gardinier, David E. "The British in the Cameroons, 1919-1939." In *Britain and Germany in Africa*, pp. 513-555. Edited by P. Gifford and W. R. Louis. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Monono, Churchill Ewumbue. "The 1972 Referendum and the Process of Nation-building in Cameroon."
- National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. *Forward to Freedom and Progress: Report of Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the NCNC Held at Kano, on August 30 and 31, 1951*. Yaba, Nigeria: Zik's Press Limited, 1951.
- Ndi, Anthony. "The Second World War in Southern Cameroons and its Impact on Mission-State Relations, 1939-1950." In *Africa and the Second World War*. Edited by David Killingray and Richard Rathbone. London: Macmillan, 1986.
- Ngoh Victor Julius. "The Origin of the Marginalization of Former Southern Cameroons (Anglophones), 1961-1966. An Historical Analysis." *Journal of Third World Studies*. Vol. XVI No. (Spring 1999): 165-185.
- Phillipson Report on the Financial/ Economic and Administrative Consequences of the Southern Cameroons on Separation from the Federation of Nigeria*. Lagos: Government Printer 1959.
- Report of Fiscal Commissioner on Financial Effects of Proposed New Constitutional Arrangement*. Lagos: Government Printer 1953.
- Report by Resumed Nigerian Constitutional Conference*. Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1958.
- The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC). "The London Communiqué". London: n.p., 1995.

IV) Internet

US concerned over violence Uptick in Cameroon(accessed 7 November 2018).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/amhtml/world/2018/10/30/us-missionary-shot-killed-front-wife-son-amid-escalating-cameroon-crisis>(accessed 2 November 2018).

<http://www.cameroon-info.net/article/cameroun-crise-anglophone-colonel-didier-badjeck-le-pasteur-charles-truman-wesco-est-mort-330420.html> (accessed 2 November 2018).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/world-africa-46122678>(accessed 8 November 2018).

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/missionary-from-indiana-killed-amid-fighting-in-cameroon.amp> (accessed 2 November 2018).

https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/aug/01/southern-cameroons#S5CV0645PO_19610801_HOC_499 (accessed 18 June 2020).

www.marketwired.com/press-release/kilimanjaro-capital-ltd-signs-oil-mineral-development(accessed 20 June 2018).

<https://www.state> (accessed 7 November 2020).

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=4188169129286343> (accessed 31 January 2021).

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1015064815974616&id=100024133214636&sfnsn=mo (accessed 28 August 2021).

V) Journals, Magazines, Newspapers and Reports

Afrika Zamani: Revue d'Histoire Africaine-Review of African History

Agence Camerounais de Presse (ACAP)

Agence France Presse (AFP) Bulletin

Associated Press

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

Cameroon Concord

Cameroon Panorama

Cameroon Review Magazine

Cameroon Times

Cameroon Tribune

Cameroon Champion

Eden

Information: Radio-Presse.

La Presse du Cameroun

La Voix de l'Amérique (VOA)

L'Effort Camerounais

Le Messenger

Municipal Updates

News Watch

Radio France Internationale (RFI)

Southern Cameroons Gazette. No. 4, Vol.7. Southern Cameroons Notice, No. 36.

Spotsnews

The Advocate

The Chronicle Times

The Guardian Post

The Herald

The Median

The Post

The Post Weekender

The Rambler

The Star News

The Sun

The Times (London)

The Times Journal

The Voice

Vision Economique

Voice of America (VOA)

West Africa

West Africa Pilot

SECONDARY SOURCES

VI) Published Works

Abang, Kennedy. *Southern Cameroons: Negotiating an Existence*. N.p. :n.p. n.d.

Ahidjo, A. *Fondements et Perspectives du Cameroun Nouveau*. Paris : Saint Lambert, 1976

Abwa, Daniel. *Sadou Daoudou parle de l'Armée Camerounaise et... 1961-1980*. Yaounde : Presses de l'UCAC, 2017.

_____. *Cameroun: Histoire d'un nationalisme 1884-1961*. Yaounde Editions CLE, 2010.

Appadorai, A. *The Substance of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

- Ardener, Shirley G. *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon 1883-1887*. Buea: Government, Press, 1968.
- Asonganyi, Tazoacha. *Cameroon: Difficult Choices in a Failed Democracy (Memoir)*. Madison. NGT Publishing, 2015.
- Atem, George. *How Unified is the Republic of Cameroon: The Unification of the Institutions of the Republic since 1961*. Limbe: ANUCAM, 2012
- Austen, Ralph A. 'Varieties of Trusteeship: African Territories under British and French Mandate, 1919-1939'. In *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, pp. 515-541. Edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, London: Yale University Press, 1971.
- Barnes, John. Willkie. New York: n.p., 1952.
- Chem-Langhee, Bongfen. *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination in the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration: The Search for Identity, well-Being and Continuity*. New York: University Press of America, 2004.
- Chiabi, Emmanuel. *The Making of Modern Cameroon: A History of Sub-state Nationalism and Disparate Union, 1914-1961*. Vol. 1. Lanham and Oxford: University Press of America, 1977.
- Deltombe, Thomas, Manuel Domergue and Jacob Tatsitsa, ed. *La Guerre du Cameroun: L'invention de la Françafrique 1948-1971*. Paris: Editions La Decouverte, 2016.
- Dike, O. *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885*. London: 1956.
- Elango, Lovett Z. *The Anglo-French Condominium in Cameroon 1914-1916: History of a Misunderstanding*. Limbe: Navi-Group Publications, 1987. LAGOS: Green and Cherished Ltd., 2018.
- Endeley, E.M.L *A Statement Made by the Premier of Southern Cameroons*. Lagos: Federal Information Service 1958.
- Epale, Simon-Joseph. *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon 1885-1875: A Study in Agrarian Capitalism*. New York: Vantage Press, 1985.
- _____. "Government by State of Emergency." In *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon Under Ahmadu Ahidjo*, pp. 100-110. Edited by Richard Joseph. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., 1978.
- Eyongetah, Tambi and Brain, Robert. *A History of the Cameroon*. London: Longman, 1974.
- Ezera, Kalu. *Constitutional Developments in Nigeria: An Analytical Study of Nigeria's Constitutional-Making Developments and the Historical and Political Factors that Affected Constitutional Change*. Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1964.

Fanso, VG. *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges: From Prehistoric times to the Twenty-first century* (Revised and Updated combined Edition). Kumbo: Bamika'ay, 2017.

Fonlon, Bernard. *The Task of Today*. Victoria: Cameroon Printing and Publish Co. Ltd., 1966.

Gardinier, David E. *Cameroon: United Nations Challenge to French Policy*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

George, Sampson A. *Kamerun Unification: Being a Discussion of a 7 Point-Solution of the Unification Problem*. London: Carey and Claridge, 1956.

Goodspeed, Stephen S. *The Nature and Functions of International Organisations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Government of Cameroon. *Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon (Law No 90-06 of 18 January 1996)* Special Official Gazette of 30 January 1996. Yaounde: National Printing Press, 1996.

Government of the Southern Cameroons. *Symposium of the Southern Portion of the Mandated Territory of the Cameroons Under the United Kingdom Administration*. Lagos: The Federal Information Service, n.d.

Hazelwood, A. ed. *African Integration and Disintegration: Case Studies in Economic and Political Union*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Human Rights Watch. *These Killings Can Be Stopped: Government and Separatist Groups Abuses in Cameroon's Anglophone Regions*. USA: n.p. 2018.

Isenberg, I. ed. *France Under De Gaulle*, Vol. 39, No. 1. New York: The H.W, Wilson Company, 1967.

Johnson, Willard R. *the Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

_____. Foreword to *An African Experiment in Nation-Building: The Bilingual Cameroon Republic Since Reunification*. Edited by Ndiva Kofele-Kale. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980.

Joseph Richard A. *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion*. London: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Kale, Paul M. *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*. Buea: Government Printers, 1967.

Kofele-Kale, Ndiva. *Tribesman and Patriots: Political Culture in a Poly-Ethnic African State*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.

LeVine, Victor T. *The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence*. California: University of California Press, 1964.

Mbaku, John Mukum and Joseph Takougang. *The Leadership Challenge in Africa: Cameroon Under Paul Biya*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc, 2004.

- Mbu, ANT. *Civil Disobedience in Cameroon*. Douala: Imprimerie Georges Frères, 1993.
- Ministère de l'Information et de la Culture de la République du Cameroun. "Le Coup d'état Manqué de 6 Avril 1984." Yaounde : SOPECAM, n.d.
- _____. "Pour Comprendre l'Affaire Affaire Ahmadou Ahidjo." Yaounde: SOPECAM, n.d.
- _____. "The National New Deal Charter." Yaoundé: SOPECAM. n.d.
- _____. "Why are we Cameroonians? Why are we proud to be Cameroonians? What kind of Cameroon do we want to foster for our children?" Yaounde: SOPECAM, n.d.
- Mukong, A. *Prisoner without a Crime*. Limbe: Alfresco Books, 1985.
- Monono, Churchill Ewumbue. *Delicate Negotiations for Reunification: A Tribute to Cameroon's Budding Diplomacy, 1959-1963*. Buea CEREDDA, 2018.
- Ndi, Anthony. *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps*. Vol. one Bamenda: Paul's Press. 2013.
- _____. *The Golden Age of Southern (West) Cameroon: Impact of Christianity 1946-1972*. Bamenda: Maple Fair Services, 2005.
- Nfi, Joseph. *Celebrating Reunification and the Eleventh Province*. n.p.: n.p., 2013.
- _____. *The Catholic Church and Anglophone sub-nationalism in Cameroon*. Galda Verlag, 2022
- Ngoh, Victor Julius. *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018): The History of a People*. Revised and Updated Edition. Limbe: Design House, 2019.
- _____. *Abrogation of Federalism in Cameroon 1972: A Historical Analysis*. Limbe: Design House, 2019.
- _____. *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification: 1955-1961*. Limbe: Presprint, 2011.
- _____. (ed.) *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study*. Limbe: Design House, 2004.
- _____. *Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2001.
- _____. "Biya and the Transition to Democracy." In *The Leadership Challenges in Africa: Cameroon Under Paul Biya*, ed. John Mukum Mbaku and Joseph Takougang. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000.
- Nyamndi, Fondi Ndifontah. *Foreign Interest in the British Cameroons Plebiscites*. Yaounde: Buma Kor Publishers, 2004.
- Rothwell, V.H. *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914-1918*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Rubin, N. *Cameroon: An African Federation*. London: Pall Mall, 1971.

Rudin, Harry. *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914: A Case study in Modern Imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1938.

Soh, Pius B. *Dr. John Ngu Foncha: The Cameroonian Statesman (A Biography)*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Centre for Social Sciences Research, 1999.

Southern Cameroons Gazette: Southern Cameroons Plebiscite 1961: The Two Alternatives. Vol 7 No 4 Buea: Government Press, 1961.

Standing Committee. *All Anglophone Conference: The Buea Declaration*. Limbe: NOOREMAC Press, 1993.

Stanford Research Institute. *The General Report, Vol. I of: The Economic Potential of West Cameroon- Priorities for Development*. Stanford. Stanford Research Institute, 1965.

Suberu, Rotim T. *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*. Lagos: Spectrum Books Ltd, 1996.

Tala, Kashim I. and Ngange Kingsley L. eds. *Anglophone Lawyers and Teachers Strikes in Cameroon (2016-2017): A Multidimensional Perspective*. Yaoundé: Les Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2019.

Torrent, Melanie. *Diplomacy and Nation-Building in Africa: Franco-British Relations and Cameroon at the End of Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012.

Underhill, Edward R. *Alfred Saker, Missionary to Africa: A Biography*. London: The Carey Kingsgate Press. 1958.

U.S Congress, 116th Congress, 2D Session, S. RES.

VI I) Dissertation (Unpublished Work)

Chem-Langhee, Bongfen. "The Kamerun Plebiscites 1959-1961: Perceptions and Strategies." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1976.

Ngoh Nlem, Anne-Paule. "The Effects of the Anglophone Crisis on the Socio-economic Development of the North-West and South-West Regions in Cameroon: A Human Security Approach." Ph.D. Dissertation, Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences, Pan African University, Yaounde, 2020.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victor Julius Ngoh is a Professor of History with particular research interest on the decolonization of Africa and especially Cameroon. He obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington State in the USA. He graduated with an M.A degree from Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA; and, a B.A degree from the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon. He has lectured in several universities in the USA and Europe. He lectured at the University of Yaoundé; University of Buea; University of Bamenda; and, at the Pan African University Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS), Yaoundé. He has several reputable publications on Cameroon to his credit. He is a Senior Fulbright Research Scholar. Prof. Ngoh is currently the President (Vice- Chancellor) of the Catholic University Institute of Buea, Cameroon. He was, at various times, Registrar at the University of Buea; Deputy Vice-Chancellor i/c of Research and Cooperation at the University of Buea; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor i/c of Academic Affairs at the University of Bamenda.

ABOUT THE BOOK

One emphatic and categorical point that runs through Victor Julius Ngoh's work is the statement that "The source of the Anglophone Problem which generated into a crisis and subsequently into an armed conflict was the constitutional proposals which emerged from the Foumban Conference of July 1961...." The linear pattern of the words "Problem," "crisis" and "armed conflict" sheds a conflict transformation light on what Chinua Achebe considers as "Where the rain began to beat us..." Ngoh's post-mortem approach aims at exhuming the bones of polarized contradictions and parochial interest that continue to be the stock in trade of both policy makers and its citizenry...

In the end, the author's tripartite legacy in writing this book is one of a watch dog observing society's predicament and proposing solutions; one of a whistle blower preventing further descent into the abyss of collective annihilation; and one of a chronicler-navigator directing the politician-sailor in sailing the ship of state to the shores of peaceful coexistence. And it is this legacy that the students of history, political science, sociology, Cameroon and African studies should hopefully take home after reading this work (George Ngwane, "Foreword").